MIJIKANAMONOGATARI
SHORT TALE
NISIOISIN

TRANSLATED BY
FANS

maxdefolsch & bluex present

MIJIKANAMONOGATARI
Short Tale

NISIOISIN

Art by VOFAN, Oh! Great
and others

Translated by fans

CONTENTS

Contents ii
(by character) vi

Preface x

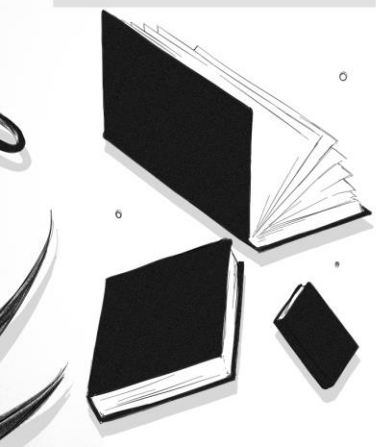
Introduction xii

Hitagi Buffet 1
Mayoi Room 9
Suruga Court 17
Nadeko Pool 25
Tsubasa Song 33

Hitagi Neck 41
Karen Arm-Leg 47
Tsukihi Eternal 53
Shinobu House 59

ART: CCHERIAS

Tsubasa Board 65
Mayoi Castle 69
Nadeko Mirror 97
Shinobu Science 103
Hitagi Salamander 125
Suruga Palace 163
Yotsugi Future 169
Ougi Travel 175
Suruga Neat 205
Black Hanekawa's Cat Sign Astrology 89
The Lost Snail 109
Princess Beauty 131
You and Nadekko! ch.1 139
Hitagi Throwing 151
Rouka God 219
Karen Brushing 233
Tsukihi Brushing 251
Yotsugi Stress 273
Challenge to the Readers 75
Hitagi Coin 81
Hitagi Figure 119
You and Nadekko! ch.2 & ch.3 181 193
The Hobonichi Techo of Araragi Koyomi, Hanekawa Tsubasa, and Sengoku Nadeko 213
Shinobu Figure 227
Koyomi History 269



Tsukimonogatari
Chapter Cross:
Tsubasa Lion
281

As a Human 337
Something Wrong 343
And Then 347

Why 353

With Caution 357

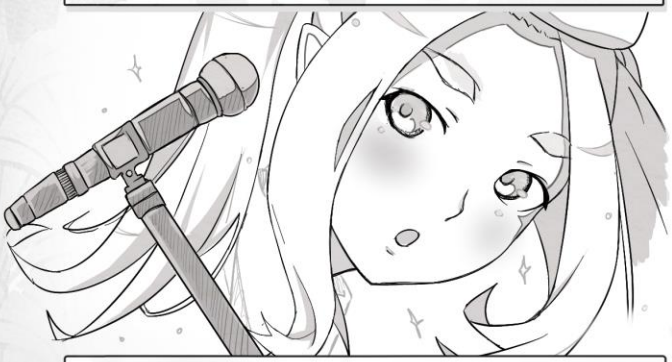
Mayoi Welcome
361

Koyomi Dictionary
371

Hitagi Dish	373	Hitagi Hermit Crab	377
Mayoi Name	385	Mayoi Ghost	391
Suruga Speed	399	Suruga Velocity	405
Nadeko Rope	411	Nadeko Courtship	417
Hitagi Nashorn	423	Mayoi Escargot	431
Suruga Earthworm	437	Nadeko Eye Level	443
Tsubasa Ranking	453	Kissshot Ranking	459
Mayoi Heaven	465	Hitagi Graph	479
Suruga Basket	487	Nadeko Dinosaur	495
Tsubasa Shelf	501	Shinobu Name	507
Karen Violence	515	Tsukihi Endless	521

Sodachi Mirror 383
Ougi Reflect 397

Sodachi Sisterhood 471



Nadeko Past 529
Shinobu Future 537

Yotsugi Song 545

Yotsugi Snow Dome 549
Sodachi Penalty 561
Ougi Road Movie 555
Shinobu Tonight 569

Afterword 574
Special Thanks 576

Challenge to the Readers 75
Ougi Travel 175
Ougi Reflect 397
Ougi Road Movie 555

Tsubasa Song 33
Tsubasa Board 65
Cat Sign Astrology 89
Tsubasa Lion 281
Something Wrong 343
Tsubasa Ranking 453
Tsubasa Shelf 501

Koyomi History 269
And Then 347
Koyomi Dictionary 371

Sodachi Mirror 383
Sodachi Sisterhood 471
Sodachi Penalty 561

Hobonichi Techo 213

Hitagi Buffet 1
Hitagi Neck 41
Hitagi Coin 81
Hitagi Figure 119
Hitagi Salamander 125
Hitagi Throwing 151
Hitagi Dish 373
Hitagi Hermit Crab 377
Hitagi Nashorn 423
Hitagi Graph 479

Suruga Court 17
Suruga Palace 163
Suruga Neat 205
Suruga Speed 399
Suruga Velocity 405
Suruga Earthworm 437
Suruga Basket 487

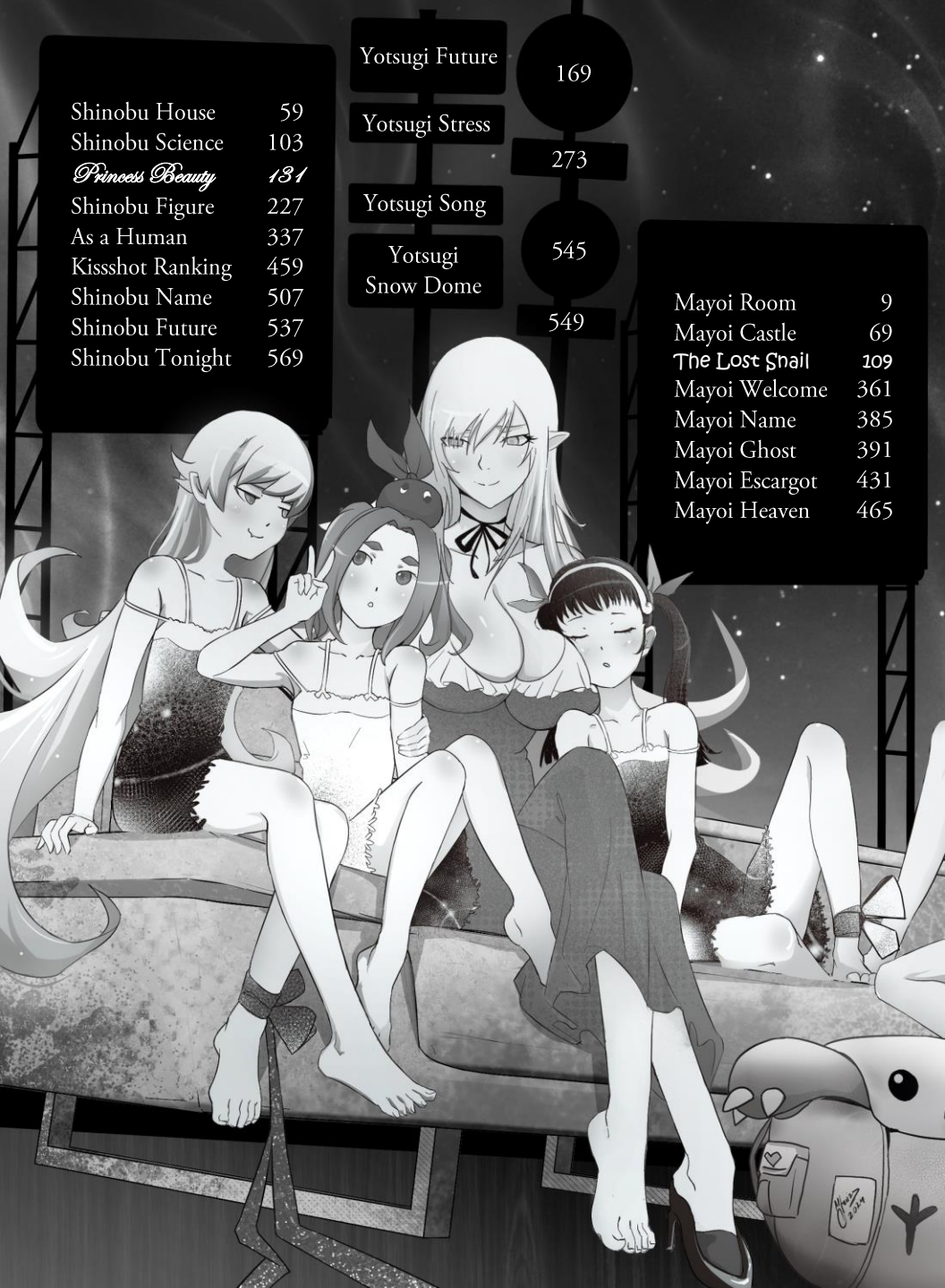
357 With Caution

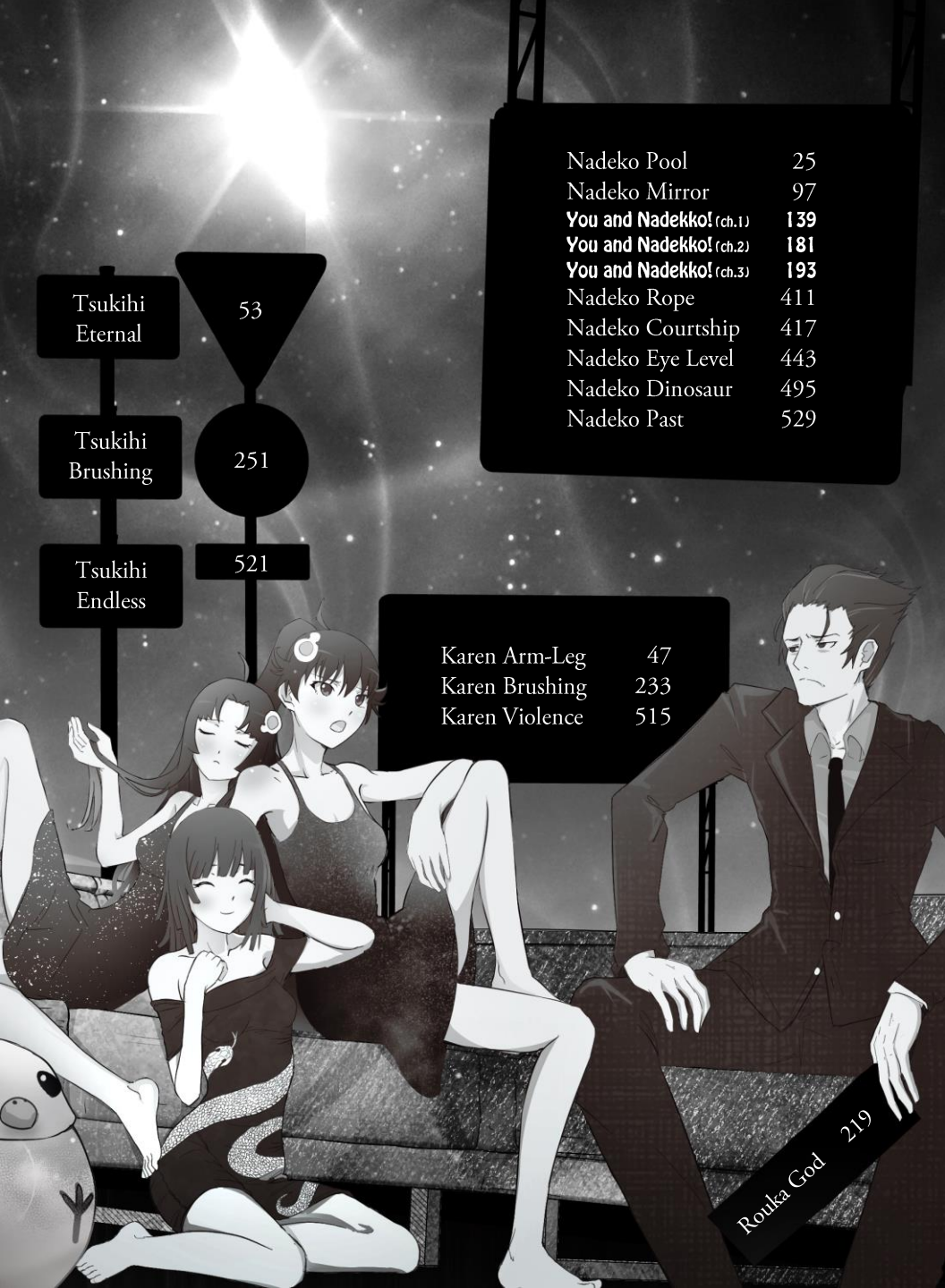
Why 353

Shinobu House 59
Shinobu Science 103
Princess Beauty *131*
Shinobu Figure 227
As a Human 337
Kissshot Ranking 459
Shinobu Name 507
Shinobu Future 537
Shinobu Tonight 569

Yotsugi Future 169
Yotsugi Stress 273
Yotsugi Song 545
Yotsugi Snow Dome 549

Mayoi Room 9
Mayoi Castle 69
The Lost Snail 109
Mayoi Welcome 361
Mayoi Name 385
Mayoi Ghost 391
Mayoi Escargot 431
Mayoi Heaven 465




Tsukihi Eternal
53
Tsukihi Brushing
251
Tsukihi Endless
521
Nadeko Pool 25
Nadeko Mirror 97
You and Nadekko! (ch.1) 139
You and Nadekko! (ch.2) 181
You and Nadekko! (ch.3) 193
Nadeko Rope 411
Nadeko Courtship 417
Nadeko Eye Level 443
Nadeko Dinosaur 495
Nadeko Past 529
Karen Arm-Leg 47
Karen Brushing 233
Karen Violence 515
Rouka God 219

PREFACE

Nine years after the inception of this project, and six years after we published the first edition of this book, I find myself once again looking back at everything that we accomplished.

It was all the way back in November 2015 that I discovered the existence of the short stories. Eager to consume more of the series while waiting for the anime to continue, I was very disappointed when I found out that almost none of the stories had been translated into English. Surely, for a series as successful as *Monogatari*, the community must have done everything already, right? It turned out that it hadn't, and the existence of the short stories itself wasn't something widely known.

I then candidly asked the */r/araragi* subreddit if people would be interested in translating these stories to share them with the English-speaking community. I was still sort of new to Reddit at the time, and figured the collaborative aspect of it could be a little bit helpful here. Of course, I had no idea of the magnitude of the project I was launching myself into, and how I would practically become the representative of a mountain of *Monogatari* extra content that was waiting for me to be unearthed. It began casually, with a couple of talented people joining me with the first translations, and just kept going from there.

I want to thank every single person who contributed anything to this project, because they've always been the real reason we've come so far, while I mostly only served as a coordinator and catalyst. Their names are listed at the end of this book.

In addition to the numerous reliable and prolific translators, proofreaders and helpers of this entire endeavor, whose hard work carried the project to completion, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to bluex, who gracefully shouldered the thankless task of putting this volume together under my amateur direction, and »sawa«, who trudged through the tedious work involved in assembling an e-book version for this new edition. Without them, work on this project would not have come nearly this far, and making this book would not have been possible. No amount of praising of their efforts will ever be enough.

And of course, thank you everyone else for the support!

With that out of the way, let's start with the real content of this book.

maxdefolsch

MIJIKANAMONOGATARI – Short Tale
Second Edition (2024-12-25 version)

INTRODUCTION

So… what are these short stories?

Before becoming the enormous series of light novels that we know today, the *Monogatari Series* started with Japanese mystery author Nisio Isin (then mostly known for his debut series *Zaregoto*) writing the first three short arcs for the magazine *Mephisto* in late 2005 and early 2006. They were then compiled into the first volume of *Bakemonogatari*, which was quickly followed by a second, newly written volume, and Nisio then kept expanding the series more and more while promising to end it every so often.

When it received an anime adaptation by studio Shaft in 2009, it quickly contributed to an immense surge in popularity, and many kinds of merchandise, such as supplementary books, Blu-ray/DVD sets or figures, have been released ever since. Alongside those were often included "short short stories" (短々編, *tantanpen*) written by Nisio, in the same style as the light novels and usually named according to the same naming scheme ([first name] [word]), sometimes as a way to elaborate on certain plot points that were only alluded to in the novels and anime, but more generally just to give extra interactions and fun conversations between the characters.

Which brings us to the present day, almost fifteen years later, now with enough content to fill two thick volumes of short stories, the first of which you are currently reading.

Are all the stories there?

Pretty much. There have been many formats for extra content along the years, that you can somewhat arbitrarily divide into several categories:

⇒ The main short stories, the largest bulk of short arcs written in the same style as the novels. They follow the classic [first name] [word] naming scheme. I also lump with them a set of five stories that do not follow this naming scheme but still adhere to a short story format and are visibly related to the main plot, as they directly tie into *Kizumonogatari*.

⇒ The crossover stories, which comprise *Mazemonogatari*, a set of fifteen longer stories where Koyomi meets various characters from other series written by Nisio Isin, and *Tsubasa Lion,* a crossover with Umino Chika's manga series *March Comes in Like a Lion,* featuring Kiriyama Rei as the narrator.

⇒ Additional material, everything that doesn't follow a normal short story format, but is written by or told from the perspective of a character.

⇒ Audiovisual content, everything audio or video, most notably the audio commentaries, the two main audio dramas *Hyakumonogatari* and the *10th Anniversary Story*, and a few more promotional videos and bonus things.

This tome contains every main short story and additional material published so far, from *Hitagi Buffet* in 2010 to *Shinobu Tonight* in 2024, and including the mythical *Mayoi Welcome*, as well as *Tsubasa Lion.*

Mazemonogatari was released as a standalone novel some time after the stories' first distribution, so it only stands to reason that their translations are also published in a separate volume.

We however omit transcripts of the audiovisual content, as they're better experienced in their original format (and quite long), as well as the few partial manga adaptations of short stories by Oh! Great.

I don't want to read a million stories, which ones are important? What's the reading order?

First, it should be noted that none of them is truly crucial to understand the series, but some are indeed related to the plot in some way and are not just funny conversations between our beloved characters. These stories need you to have read or watched until a certain arc to understand (for example, *Rouka God* is a prequel to the events in *Suruga Devil*, and *Yotsugi Stress* expands upon something that's only mentioned in *Shinobu Mail*). Other than that, someone who has already watched the anime has enough context for the vast majority of the stories, as only a few of them go past that point in the timeline.

The only objective (and boring) answer regarding the question of a reading order is simply to tell you to look at the release dates of each short story and novel arc, and intertwine them accordingly. While it would work fine, it would be extremely tedious, and it sounds more interesting to me to try my hand at filtering out the unnecessary stories, and incorporating the more important ones during a first experience of the series (or even a rewatch) in places that make sense narratively. As you can guess, this might in some cases come down to personal preference, and some of you may disagree with certain choices I made, but hopefully most of them should be sensible and uncontroversial.

Without further ado, here's my attempt at a short story reading order, with brief, non-spoilery descriptions of the stories to read. I will also try to make an arbitrary distinction between "important stories" and "less important stories that I'd still recommend", as well as mention some of the relevant audiovisual content that is not included in this book.

Bakemonogatari *[Hitagi Crab, Mayoi Maimai, Suruga Monkey]*

Hitagi Throwing: an elaboration on character backstories.

Bakemonogatari *[Nadeko Snake, Tsubasa Cat]*

Tsubasa Song: a little epilogue to *Tsubasa Cat.*

Kizumonogatari *[Koyomi Vamp]*

With Caution, *Why*, *As a Human*, *Something Wrong:* hidden moments from the events of *Koyomi Vamp.*

Kissshot Ranking: another continuation of a *Koyomi Vamp* conversation.

Nisemonogatari *[Karen Bee]*

Nisemonogatari *[Tsukihi Phoenix]*

Hitagi Neck, *Karen Arm-Leg*, *Tsukihi Eternal*, *Shinobu House:* together, recount a relatively important character relationship event.

Nadeko Pool: foreshadowed by a line in the novel version of *Tsukihi Phoenix.*

Nekomonogatari Kuro *[Tsubasa Family]*

Mayoi Room: directly relevant to the events of *Tsubasa Tiger* and *Mayoi Jiangshi.*

Nekomonogatari Shiro *[Tsubasa Tiger]*

Kabukimonogatari *[Mayoi Jiangshi]*

Hanamonogatari Ad Truck Narration: a teaser of the upcoming arc by Suruga and Koyomi, originally broadcast by advertising trucks.

Hanamonogatari *[Suruga Devil]*

Suruga Neat: another look at a parental relationship.

Otorimonogatari *[Nadeko Medusa]*

Onimonogatari *[Shinobu Time]*

Koimonogatari *[Hitagi End]*

Hitagi Salamander: more perspective on a certain couple.

You and Nadekko: a manga series relevant to *Hitagi End.*

Rouka God: another bit of backstory, leading to *Suruga Devil.*

Tsukimonogatari *[Yotsugi Doll]*

Koyomimonogatari *[Koyomi Stone, Koyomi Flower, Koyomi Sand, Koyomi Water, Koyomi Wind, Koyomi Tree, Koyomi Tea, Koyomi Mountain, Koyomi Torus, Koyomi Seed, Koyomi Nothing, Koyomi Dead]*

Owarimonogatari *[Ougi Formula 001-017]*

Challenge to the Readers: a segment exclusive to the serialized publication, where you're given this challenge right before the reveal of the culprit of the arc's mystery.

Owarimonogatari *[Ougi Formula 018-019, Sodachi Riddle, Sodachi Lost]*

Ougi Travel: a look at the thoughts of a mysterious character.

Tsubasa Lion: a crossover arc that also revisits someone's past.

Owarimonogatari *[Shinobu Mail]*

Yotsugi Stress: another view of something Koyomi didn't get to see during *Shinobu Mail*.

Princess Beauty: a backstory presented as a fairy tale.

Owarimonogatari *[Mayoi Hell, Hitagi Rendezvous, Ougi Dark]*

Zoku Owarimonogatari *[Koyomi Reverse]*

And Then: the last of the *Kizumonogatari* stories, taking place much later.

10th Anniversary Story Drama CD: an excellent and emotional epilogue to the anime.

Audio commentaries: if you enjoyed the anime and the funny banter, every single episode has a secondary audio track where characters comment over it, making it a viable option for a pseudo-rewatch with a lot of new content to experience.

Karen Brushing, *Tsukihi Brushing:* take a wild guess.

This is where you can stop if you've only watched the anime until *Zoku Owarimonogatari* (or have only read the official English release of the novels, which hasn't continued past that point at the time of writing).

Otherwise, you can proceed with the following for a few more stories during *Off Season*, *Monster Season,* and the ongoing *Family Season*:

Orokamonogatari *[Sodachi Fiasco, Suruga Bonehead, Tsukihi Undo]*
Wazamonogatari *[Acerola Bon Appétit, Karen Ouga, Tsubasa Sleeping]*
Nademonogatari *[Nadeko Draw]*
Musubimonogatari *[Zenka Mermaid, Nozomi Golem, Mitome Wolf, Tsuzura Human]*

Mayoi Welcome: a prologue to the events of *Shinobu Mastered*. Also the most legendary of the short stories, due to its extreme rarity.
Shinobumonogatari *[Shinobu Mastered]*
Yoimonogatari *[Mayoi Snail, Mayoi Snake]*
Amarimonogatari *[Yotsugi Buddy, Yotsugi Shadow]*
Ougimonogatari *[Ougi Light, Ougi Flight]*
Shinomonogatari *[Shinobu Suicide]*
Sodachi Sisterhood: a look at some characters during the events of *Shinomonogatari*.
Shinomonogatari *[Nadeko Araundo]*
Understanding the Monogatari Series in 120 seconds: a retrospective by Shinobu and Nadeko, to celebrate the completion of *Monster Season*.
Tsukihi Endless: a fully meta retrospective on the short stories and series itself, to celebrate the end of the manga adaptation.

Shinobu Tonight: a sweet send-off before moving to the next step in Koyomi's life.
Ikusamonogatari Message Movie: an emotional speech.
Ikusamonogatari *[Hitagi Honeymoon]*

What's the chronological order?

As usual with *Monogatari*, the short stories are all over the timeline. Unfortunately, most of the stories don't have enough indications to deduce the exact date, but some of them are known due to their relation with other plot elements.

Excluding *Princess Beauty* (Kissshot's backstory from centuries in the past) and *Hitagi Throwing* (where Suruga reminisces about her first meeting with Hitagi in middle school), the earliest known story is *With Caution* on March 26 (toward the beginning of *Kizumonogatari*), and the latest known story is *Shinobu Tonight*, which takes place after *Musubimonogatari*. And although they're not featured in this book, the last arc of *Mazemonogatari*, *Magokoro Finisher*, goes beyond this point, and the *Ikusamonogatari Message Movie* is set even later, as *Ikusamonogatari* itself is the furthest novel in the timeline at the time of writing.

Are they canon?

The meaning of canon can get surprisingly confusing in a series where breaking the fourth wall with meta statements is not just a one-off joke, but a constant feature. That being said, some of the short stories are plot-related and referenced in the light novels, even when they're said to be "related to the world of the anime adaptation". For example, the short story *Mayoi Room* explains why Mayoi forgot her backpack at Koyomi's house on August 20; in *Shinobu Time*, Koyomi actually tells the reader to check out the *Bakemonogatari Anime Complete Guidebook* for more information. My position is that writing off every such moment as "just a joke" and/or "not canon" because it doesn't conform with our usual idea of what a narrative looks like would be completely arbitrary, and so I view all short stories as canon by default, no matter how egregious or meta the content, in the same way I don't mind the characters in the novels bringing up how the anime showed their world differently, or how they're fleetingly aware of future information from reading their own novels set in the future relative to them, or get called to record the anime's audio commentaries.

Do you happen to know a trivia fact so obscure that you're probably the only one who would ever care about it?

I'm glad you asked.

All the novel arcs use 3-digit chapter numbers, starting from *001*. This is also the case of the crossover arcs (*Mazemonogatari* and *Tsubasa Lion*), which are lengthy enough to warrant several chapters. However, for the short stories, some, though not all of them, were published with a "*000*" chapter number.

The short stories that did have a *000* are: the *Guidebook* stories, the *Figure* stories, *Koyomi History*, the five *Kizumonogatari* stories, *Mayoi Welcome*, the manga short stories, and the few stories released concurrently and after them. The ones that did not are: the literary discussion short stories, *Hitagi Coin*, the *Heroine Book* stories, and *Koyomi Dictionary*.

… And in *Mijikanamonogatari*, all stories got a *000* to ruin my trivia.

What's the deal with *Mijikanamonogatari*?

The idea of an official compilation of the short stories was teased a couple times, most notably in *Shinobumonogatari* (July 2017), where Mayoi stated that while *Mayoi Welcome* was particularly difficult to obtain, it would be compiled into a book in seventeen years, so we should look forward to it. But like many fourth-wall-breaking moments in the series, it seemed at the time that it wasn't supposed to amount to more than a cute joke.

In May 2023, the last manga short story, *Tsukihi Endless*, discussed again the idea of a short stories book among other meta topics (and how they didn't have enough stories to fill a book until then…), and ended with Koyomi and Tsukihi saying they should live long lives until this volume was released, with the last lines being "The next story in the *Monogatari Series*, *Mijikanamonogatari* (*Short Tale*). Don't miss it."; once again, it sounded like just another quip in the spirit of this meta story, but it was a perfect occasion to rename my own book to this, thinking *Tsukihi Endless* would be its very last story.

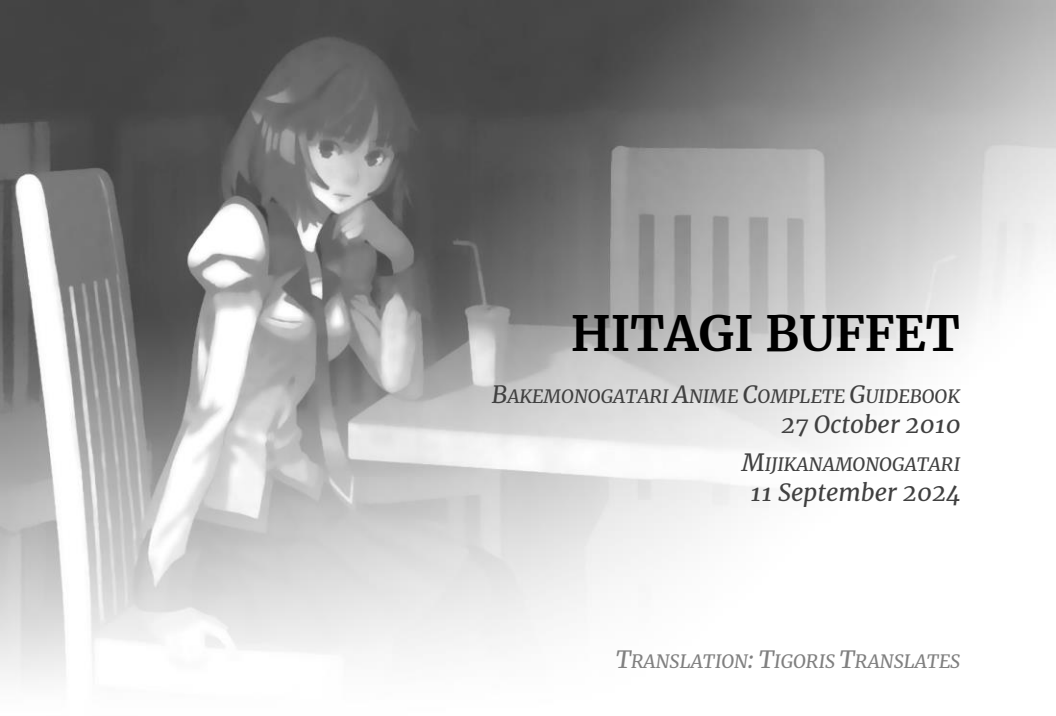
But a year later, it would turn out to be a very real project. *Mijikanamonogatari* was released in September 2024, and contains most, but not all, short stories published to date (excluding all the manga short stories as well as a few others, but including *Mayoi Welcome* as promised), followed by four newly written stories. While it did present me with some additional logistics issues, this also validated my choice, even if my version is not limited to what the official *Mijikanamonogatari* features.

As an aside, funnily enough, if we take *Shinobumonogatari* to be taking place in 2007 (about one year after *Bakemonogatari*, which is sort of implied to be in 2006, although that's another matter more complicated that it appears at first glance), then "seventeen years later" indeed takes us to 2024, and this prophetic statement was fulfilled.

What's next for this project?

With the publication of this *Second Edition* alongside a compiled version of *Mazemonogatari*, which together contain every single short story published so far with nothing missing anymore, I feel like I've reached a satisfactory level of completion for this book. I will of course keep the translations themselves going no matter what, I'm just not making any guarantees toward the possibility of a future, substantially different *Third Edition*, as at most I could see myself release minor updates of this edition should I deem it necessary.

That being said, this volume has been delayed enough for us to witness the surprising announcement of an anime adaptation of the *Off* & *Monster Seasons* after more than five years of hiatus (which, I'm now realizing, coincides with the time elapsed since our *First Edition*), quickly followed by the even more surprising (at least to me) publication of *Mijikanamonogatari* as an official short stories book, long after I brought mine into existence. It now seems all but guaranteed that Nisio will have more opportunities to write short stories for possibly many more years, at which point I might feel compelled to significantly update this book again, who knows?



HITAGI BUFFET

Bakemonogatari Anime Complete Guidebook
27 October 2010

Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Translation: Tigoris Translates

Senjougahara and I saw each other every day at school, so it was only rarely that we went to the trouble of meeting up on Sundays. But on that Sunday, at noon, more specifically, I had promised to meet her.

The reason for this was a ticket for a cake buffet that she had received from her father, which was only valid on this Sunday, and so she had suddenly proposed that we meet up and put it to use. The location was a sweets café, which, in order to maintain its dignified "out of reach for commoners" air, did not engage in such barbarous acts as having all-you-can-eat buffets. However, as a special event to celebrate the anniversary of their store opening, they were having a cake buffet just for one day.

Now, I had worried that this buffet might have donuts somewhere in the lineup, in which case there was the possibility that Shinobu would come creeping out of my shadow to snatch them up, but she'd never appeared in front of Senjougahara before, and she didn't seem to care for anything outside of Mister Donut (she doesn't really eat human food in the first place), so I felt that it should be safe enough to attend.

Speaking of worries, though, it was hard to ignore the café decorations that made it difficult for any young man to enter the building, but I would simply have to endure that.

If the decorations were a form of harassment from Senjougahara, then it was a very minor form of harassment compared to other things she had done. The store had a wide variety of cakes, all of which were more delicious than any I'd tasted before, so I quickly got over my qualms about the store's appearance.

Mm. Truly delicious.

It was amazing what could be tolerated if it were paired with delicious food. Humans truly are creatures who are controlled by their hunger.

Well, I supposed that was also true of vampires.

"Senjougahara. Have you gotten fat?"

And then…

In a short lull in my eating, I suddenly voiced aloud the thought that drifted into my mind.

I haven't watched any comedy shows in a while, but what happened next was like a scene taken straight from one of them. Just as comedians love to throw pies in each other's faces for an easy laugh, I suddenly found a shortcake flying straight for my face.

It wasn't clear if they had made them just for the day to facilitate customers eating a lot or if they always used that design, but the shortcake that was traveling through the air toward my head was not the typical size of a shortcake but instead a miniaturized version. And, fortunately for me, that small size allowed me to avoid getting my face or clothes dirty by catching the confection cleanly in my mouth.

Now that's a very direct way of eating.

"Hm? Did you say something, Araragi-kun?"

Senjougahara's pupils were dilated.

She was terrifyingly expressionless.

"Girls do not get fat."

"Huh…? Is that so?"

"That's right. We simply increase."

She took her fork in hand and, as if to spite me, began to quickly eat the cakes that were arranged on the table, starting from the edge and working her way inward.

"Do not think of it as getting fat; think of it as growing."

"…"

That was quite a stretched interpretation.

"If I keep eating like this, eventually there will be two of me."

"That sounds altogether terrifying."

That was a terrifying way to think of it, but the thought of a second Senjougahara was also terrifying.

"And you're too thin to start with, so gaining even a little bit of weight shows really easily."

"Don't say that my weight shows."

She held her fork like a weapon.

Pointed toward me, her boyfriend.

… But, not too long ago, Senjougahara would have thrown her fork at me from the start instead of lobbing a cake at me, so viewed through that lens, she had become a much gentler person.

I wouldn't say that she'd become softer, not with our current conversation topic.

"You really have no delicacy at all to bring up a girl's weight in conversation, Araragi-kun."

"Mm."

She wasn't wrong there.

I suppose that I simply wanted to poke at her a bit after watching her eat cake after cake without stopping to look at me or even her cup of tea. She was being so shameless and expressionless that I couldn't help but want to make her react in some way.

In short, it made me want to tease her.

"Although I must admit that I have gained a bit of weight recently."

"Oh, so you really have."

I thought that maybe I had been imagining it.

Maybe I was fairly perceptive after all.

"Yes. To be more specific, I've gained about five kilos."

"Isn't that a lot?!"

Five kilos!

That's how much her entire body weighed during the whole crab incident!

In that sense, she really had grown enough to have a second Senjougahara.

"It's fine, isn't it? 3D movies are all the rage nowadays."

"I don't know about that. I don't think that means people want to see stomachs protruding over belts."

"Oh, shut up. Or I'll make your guts pop out."

Flying visceral fat.

I don't want to see that in 3D.

Hmm.

She didn't look to have gained that much weight… Or, rather, she didn't look to have grown that much.

"Maybe you should go back to running track? You're not maintaining your figure."

"Mm."

Senjougahara hated to talk about the past, especially middle school, but she must have agreed with me to some degree because she didn't argue and instead looked thoughtful.

"Well, if I were to make some excuse…"

She began to speak while still eating cake.

"It wasn't until recently that I was able to eat my fill of the things that I like. I'd gone so long without even considering that possibility that now it makes me happy."

"Hm?"

"You know, because of the crab, I didn't have any body weight. So, much like I had to be careful with the weight of my clothing, I also had to limit how much I ate."

Because if she ate too much, it would be too heavy.

That's what Senjougahara was telling me.

"Aah…"

I nodded.

It made sense.

That was the reason she was so thin from the start.

Senjougahara was tall for being a girl (she was taller than myself), so even if she did gain five kilos, in reality, she might still be underweight for a girl of her height.

"Being able to eat until my stomach is full of things that I like, it's nice. I can really feel that I like it."

Senjougahara said, repeating herself.

"When I can feel that I like something, it feels like I'm being saved by it. I'm a person who has made all kinds of mistakes, but if I can at least recognize that something wonderful is wonderful, then I feel like I can forgive myself."

"Forgive yourself—"

Being saved by it.

That… I could understand as well.

Or perhaps, more than understanding, I could sympathize.

Or maybe it's the other way around.

Maybe only people like myself and Senjougahara could be saved and forgiven by finding something to love.

"People like to speak negatively when they talk about people who are 'in love with being in love', whether it applies to people, hobbies, or whatever… but I want to know, what's wrong with that?"

Only someone who has never hated themselves would say such a thing—that's what she was saying.

"You might be right there. … But I don't think that excuses you for overindulging in cake. Moderation in all things."

"You're right."

She didn't stop eating.

The Senjougahara family wasn't exactly wealthy, so she was possibly simply wanting to eat as much as she could while she had this fleeting chance.

I'd already said something indelicate before, but in my opinion, girls who were a bit plump were cute, so I thought she could stand to gain another two kilos.

"Maybe I should go jogging with Kanbaru."

"I wouldn't if I were you. Her diet techniques are not something for any normal person to try."

"By the way, you've been eating quite a lot of cake yourself, Araragi-kun. Just to let you know, Araragi-kun, I will not hesitate for a second to break up with you if your BMI goes above 20."

"Isn't that a bit harsh?"

A BMI of 20? That's stricter than a person with metabolic syndrome.

"Well, I don't think either of us has to worry about that."

"Oh? You're certainly confident. Why is that?"

"Well, I only just realized it recently, but I guess you could call it a perk of my vampire physiology. Vampires are always in their peak physical form, so even if I gain some weight, my body will naturally go right back to being its ideal weight. Basically, I can't get fat."

Clang.

Senjougahara dropped her fork.

I'd never seen such a shocked expression on her face before.

Her position as an expressionless character was collapsing.

"W-Well, it's just a side effect. It's not like I can lose weight as well as Kanbaru. I'm sure I could get fat to some degree. So it doesn't change that I'm jealous of her—Senjougahara-san?"

"How enviable…"

She was staring at me so intently.

"I cannot acknowledge such an unfair ability… How dare you look down on my weight gain while you've got a physiology like that…"

"W-Wait, I didn't say anything negative about you?"

"Alright, fine then. Just watch. Unlike you, Araragi-kun, who relies on help from an aberration, I will show you what a true human is capable of. I will lose every gram of weight that I've gained. I, Senjougahara Hitagi, declare the commencement of my rapid weight loss plan."

"R-Rapid weight loss plan…"

So it wasn't just a diet? It seemed a bit overly dramatic.

"Yes. As soon as I'm done eating here, I'll put my plan into action!"

And with that, she began to eat the cakes with her bare hands (as she had dropped her fork). She ate with incredible vigor, even eating the cakes that I had selected for myself.

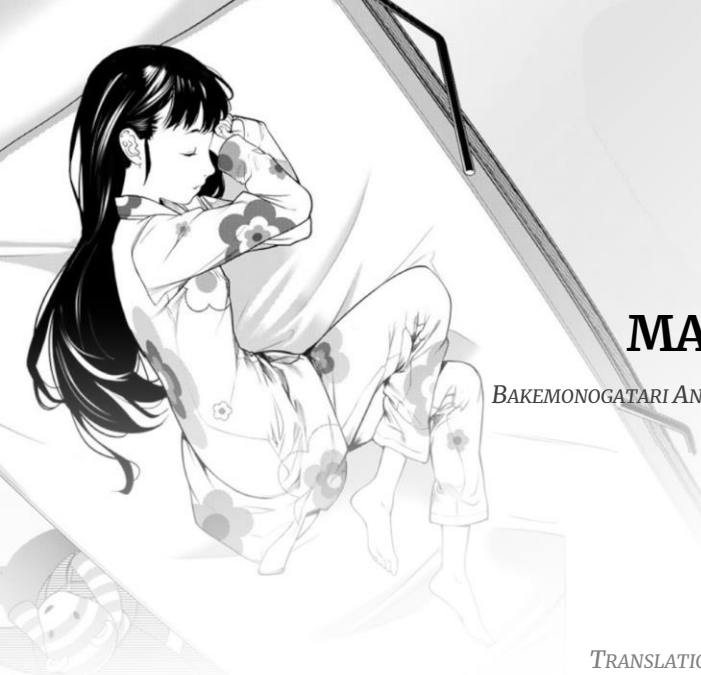
While I was a bit concerned about her determination to eat every single cake that she could get her hands on, I felt no desire to rain on her parade any further as I watched the expressionless Senjougahara stuff herself with happiness just as she stuffed herself with a variety of spongy and sweet cakes.

If Senjougahara was happy, then that made me happy without even needing to eat the cake myself.

I thought today was the best day.

… By the way, as a bit of an epilogue, I will announce that Senjougahara really did join Kanbaru in her training, and she did indeed lose weight in a comically short period of time.

Her determination was definitely not something to scoff at.



MAYOI ROOM

Bakemonogatari Anime Complete Guidebook
27 October 2010

Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Translation: Polaris Translations

That Sunday, I was in my room at my wits' end.

"This is bad. What am I going to do? For it to turn out like this… Aah. I can't recover from this. I thought I was an idiot, an idiot, but to think that I could be this much of an idiot… I can't even follow up on this."

Muttering these words of regret almost deliriously, I nervously raised my head and glanced at the bed.

What I thought from that glance was, of course, "it would be nice if this was a hallucination~".

That's right, I wonder if this was just a dream.

Something like this couldn't possibly occur in reality.

"Akirame-san."[1]

It said.

The hallucination sitting on top of the bed spoke to me.

[1] 諦め (*akirame*, "resignation")

"No matter how much you pray to be rescued, I'm not going to disappear, and you aren't going to wake up, Akirame-san."

The hallucination.

Rather, Hachikuji Mayoi said.

"… No, it's true that right now there isn't a more appropriate name for me, and I have no choice but to resign myself to the fact that right now it's a perfect example of how names and natures do often agree, but Hachikuji, my name is Araragi."

"Sorry, I stuttered."

"Wrong. It was on purpose…"

"I stutteted!"

"Oh, so it wasn't on purpose…"

"I stuttired."[2]

"Well of course you're tired with how many times you've stuttered now…"

I wasn't even in the mood to do the usual exchange.

Well, of course.

At any rate, right now, to an extent that couldn't even be compared to spring break or Golden Week, my life had been raised to a critical moment of unprecedented scale.

It made me want to bury my face in my lap.

Hachikuji was in my room.

A fifth-grade girl was in my room.

Of all things.

Now then, for the sake of explaining the current situation, it is necessary to turn back the hands of the clock just a little bit—yes, it was just one hour ago (it's really just a little bit).

I had just taken a break from studying and gone out cycling when, in the middle of the road, I discovered the backpack-laden figure of a twintailed, fifth-grade girl.

"Oh, isn't it Hachikuji? It's been a while."

---

[2] 噛みあきた (*kamiakita)* with あきた (*akita,* "bored")

I can only remember up until I thought that.

That is, I was conscious up until that point.

But, immediately after, as if suddenly overcome by something, I rushed up to Hachikuji, grabbed her petite figure, tied her onto the bicycle behind me, and took her all the way home like that.

"… This is abduction, isn't it."

I had become a criminal.

Not to mention it was abduction of a minor.

As far as I know, isn't this one of the worst crimes that humanity is capable of?

"The word 'abduction', it's really easy to stumble over, huh… Ahaha."

Already my thoughts had turned toward escaping from reality.

My mentality was surprisingly fragile.

"No, it's not my fault… It's because Hachikuji was just too cute… Really, I'm the victim here."

"That's the worst thing to say, Araragi-san."

Wearing that backpack on her back, on top of the bed, with those eyes that said "I always thought you would commit some sort of crime, but you finally went and did it, didn't you", Hachikuji went "haah" with an exaggerated sigh.

"You're being extremely nonsensical as usual, you know~"

She said.

"To think that you would take me, a ghost who haunts the streets, and bring me back to your home. Moreover that you would drag me into your room! You're completely disregarding the rules of aberrations. Oshino would be astonished at you, not me."

"Eh? But, since you were promoted two ranks up from a ghost that haunts a specific place to a wandering ghost, can't you freely go wherever you want now?"

That was what I had thought.

"The basis for myself doesn't change like that. Like humans, I'm not at that level of freedom. It's just that the idea of 'I won't be able to arrive

anywhere', the binding of the Lost Cow, is what's gone. I'm just not a lost child anymore."

"Hmm."

"They say that vampires can't enter the homes of others, right? Without the permission of one of the residents, they can't even open the door—well, it's something along those lines. In my case, the streets are my place of residence."

"Hmm… The streets, huh?"

Like a guardian deity for travelers?

I never really thought of it like that, but for Hachikuji, even after the Lost Cow incident, I've only met her on the roads.

"For this kind of spoilery conversation to happen, it's good that we're in a special extra story, right?"

"Don't say something so meta. Er, don't say something so careless.[3] Just try being me, who may very well get arrested because of this extra story!"

"It's fine, you know. I'm only just saying this, but since you only abducted and confined a ghost that's been dead for over ten years, it won't become a crime."

"These days, you never know if it might be a crime…"

After all, there have been trends to protect the rights of characters that don't even exist that've been rising day after day.

"Well, isn't it alright? Let's just move on from the fact that it happened like this and leave fortune to the heavens. It's also the first time I get to visit the room of a boy, so let's just call it a room date."

"A room date?"

Hm.

Well, alright.

No use crying over spilled milk, so I'll resign myself to it.

I really am Akirame-san.

"Shall we play cards? Like *Rich Man, Poor Man*?"

---

[3] Koyomi first says メタ (*meta*, "meta") before correcting himself and saying 滅多 (*metta*, "careless").

"Oh, sounds good. I'll get my two little sisters, too."

"It's alright to play with the ambulance rule, right?"

"I don't know any local rules like that!"

Rather, Karen and Tsukihi probably won't be able to see Hachikuji (and even if they did, how would I introduce her to them) so I guess we can't play *Rich Man, Poor Man.*

Hachikuji probably already knew that, anyway.

"But really, Araragi-san, your room is very tasteless, isn't it. Instead of keeping things tidy… How should I say it. I think calling it savage would get to the point."

"Don't say such rude things."

"So, where did you hide your porn?"

"Don't say the same things as Kanbaru!"

"Don't tell me it's under this bed… If you were getting aroused from the fact that you made me sit above your porn, you'd become an exceptional pervert!"

"I'm not that exceptional!"

I'm exceptionally normal!

Not to mention, since my little sisters can invade this room at any time, I would never hide such treasured books in such a standard location.

"Heh. Then, where have you hidden them?"

When Hachikuji asked me, I triumphantly answered while grinning and sticking out my chest.

"This is a little unexpected but allow me to teach you where they are, Hachikuji… Currently, my porn is inside… my sisters' room!"

"…"

I had been completely led on by Hachikuji.

Hachikuji, who had always accepted me while smiling (even after being abducted), now looked at me as if I was a genuine pervert.

"Then it's expected that even Kanbaru-san wasn't able to find them… Er, Araragi-san. Um, how should I put it… Could you not come any closer to me, please?"

"Please stop shaking with fear on top of my bed."

This would be terrible in picture form.

"I had heard rumors of a second season or a movie, but if Araragi-san doesn't change his character then something like that will be a mere dream of a dream."

"Hmph. Sorry, but I won't throw away what makes me, *me*."

"You see, what makes you, *you,* is basically a crime. … Well, if there's nothing weird under this bed, then I guess I'm fine."

"? Fine with what?"

"That is, getting into bed."

With a heave-ho, she changed her sitting position.

For the first time as far as I could remember, Hachikuji took off her backpack (though she took it off before in the anime), opened it, and began to dig around inside.

"Excuse me, Araragi-san. I'd like to change clothes so could you please turn the other way?"

"Eh, what? Are you joking?"

"I am not."

She told me so firmly.

I reluctantly obeyed.

But changing clothes? Into what? Why?

Speaking of which, earlier when Sengoku came to my room there was the same sort of situation. When I turned around, I thought Hachikuji would be bra-less and in bloomers and got excited, or rather my heart pounded (even if I correct myself, it's amazing how the impression doesn't change), but no matter how long I stood, she never said "it's alright now".

Feeling like the old man and woman from *Tsuru no Ongaeshi*,[4] the story of the crane's return of a favor, I turned around, unable to wait any longer.

"…"

[4] 鶴の恩返し (*tsuru no ongaeshi*, "crane's return of a favor") is a story from Japanese folklore which, as the name and Koyomi indicate, is about a crane who returns a favor to a man.

Hachikuji, having untied her hair and changed into pajamas, was sleeping soundly.

Her backpack off and her hair untied, Hachikuji was—

She didn't look like a snail at all.

She was a very cute girl that suited her age.

"Ah, that's right, she was on the way to her mother's house, wasn't she… That's why she had nightclothes in her backpack."

And she—had walked the whole way.

Ten years ago.

And even since then, she had been walking this whole time.

If that was the case then surely—she'd be tired.

"In that case, just rest for a while. Sleep tight, okay."

Because I'll let you sleep whenever you want.

The face of Hachikuji sleeping so peacefully, so happily.

That sleeping face makes me completely happy.

It seemed today was the best day.

… By the way, later on this crime was discovered by Hanekawa, and I was treated very cruelly after that.

I felt like I could just sleep forever.

SURUGA COURT

Bakemonogatari Anime Complete Guidebook
27 October 2010

Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Translation: Polaris Translations

When the day to settle things with Kanbaru finally arrived, it fell on a Sunday. Well, since I don't have a lot of space I won't go into detail, but recently, that girl had ascended to a practically intolerable level. Aside from me, when I learned that even Senjougahara was bothered, I finally decided that the situation had gotten serious. It would be the right thing to scold her as her senior while it wasn't too late.

If I didn't show my dignity as her senior at this point, I would be setting a bad example.

And, with that, we had a duel.

I wrote a letter of challenge to Kanbaru.

I really did write it.

With a brush.

For times like these it was important to set the mood and everything, so I even went to a DIY store and assembled all the equipment, and for the first time in a while I rubbed out ink from an inkstone. I wasn't able to

write out the characters quite as well as I had planned, and doing so took just about the entirety of my Saturday, but I'd say it went alright.

The designated location for our showdown was a sports center on the outskirts of town, and the event of our showdown was basketball, i.e. Kanbaru's field of expertise.

No, rather than a field of expertise, considering that she's in a class of the national level, you could very well call it her stronghold—heheh, are you saying that I would have had a chance if I had just challenged her in mathematics?

Well.

I will defeat Kanbaru in a one-on-one!

"… Huh, Araragi-senpai, you've come looking awfully sporty."

I, who had come to the meeting place enthusiastically and talking big, was greeted by Kanbaru-san, wearing heels and a frilly skirt and a lacy blouse, her hair arranged with a pink ribbon, and though I don't know if it could accurately be called gothic lolita, she nevertheless seemed to be wrapped up in a very gothic lolita-like fashion that seemed excessively decorated.

It was a perfect mismatch with her bandaged left arm.

"…"

It certainly contrasted with me, wearing basketball shoes chosen for me by Karen, with shorts and a tank top and even a towel wrapped around my head, but when the two of us were lined up like this, we ended up looking like a cosplay combination.

No no no no.

I myself was fine.

"Er, well, Kanbaru-san. This may be a foolish question, and perhaps it may be a rather absurd question, but whatever might that unusual appearance be?"

Was my thoughtless, clumsy response.

"Were you the type of person that wore skirts and stuff?"

"? I'm always in a skirt, right? For my school uniform."

"You could say that, but…"

“Well, it’s true that I did try to be conscious of my fashion, for once. After all, it’s my second date with Araragi-senpai.”

“…”

The letter of challenge had failed to convey its intentions.

This girl was the kind of person who didn’t just not listen to what people said, she also didn’t read what people wrote to her.

And, my battle with the ink yesterday had been on the level of playing badminton with my sisters, too.

I should’ve just settled it with a text message.

“But that’s my Araragi-senpai. If I were to talk about how sleeveless clothes suited you, I’d probably say they don’t. There’s a proverb that goes ‘you can’t shake an empty sleeve’,[5] but Araragi-senpai would end up shaking even empty sleeves.”

“Is that really supposed to be praising me? Also, I don’t remember becoming yours at all!”

“‘The Araragi-senpai that has my respect’, was what I was abbreviating.”

“Don’t abbreviate it!”

“I did praise you, Araragi-senpai, by saying you were stylish, but I didn’t do so out of complete honesty; conversely, I was only able to say it since I knew you wouldn’t misunderstand by thinking I was saying it to compliment or flatter you, but really, there isn’t anyone else like it. A person who looks cool with a towel wrapped around his head.”

“Then you really weren’t praising me, were you!?”

“But coming here all the way from your house in that style takes a lot of courage, so I’m seriously in admiration.”

Kanbaru said so with a smile.

To her, she might seriously be trying to praise me, but it also had the effect of punishing me.

---

[5] 無い袖は振れない (*nai sode wa furenai*, “you can’t shake an empty sleeve”) is a Japanese proverb that originates from the old habit of keeping one’s wallet in the kimono’s sleeve, since they didn’t have pockets. Therefore, the phrase means something along the lines of “you can’t use what you don’t have”.

"So, what kind of date is it today? That is, what kind of date are we going on, Araragi-senpai?"

"Please, read at least a single line of the letter before coming. Did you think we were going to do anything other than basketball at this sports center?"

"Though I think there are other things that we could do… But ah, I see."

Kanbaru nodded.

"I thought something like this could happen so it's a good thing I brought a basketball with me."

"It wasn't on purpose!?"

She really didn't read to the end.

So we went to the reception desk and paid for two hours (since it wasn't a date we split the cost) to borrow a half court. Even with the two of us it was still a bit too wide.

There was a place to rent sportswear, but Kanbaru said "it's alright like this". If I were to tell the truth I would have told her I didn't think that gothic lolita fashion really suited her all that much, but it seemed that she liked it and didn't want to take it off.

Well.

I felt like I was being looked down on with someone with that fashion as my opponent, but I wasn't going to be too strict about it.

First of all, wasn't it awfully unusual that Kanbaru didn't want to take off her clothes?—Though I don't know if it was going to last.

It'll be too late to say that you want to take them off when my score is double yours, okay?

"Let's see. Since it's a half court, we won't decide offense and defense, and for scoring, shall we go with streetball rules, Araragi-senpai?"

"Go with whatever you want. I'll at least let you decide the rules. Since I'm not going to let you decide to shoot."

"That wasn't very good."

From Kanbaru came an unexpected criticism.

Well, since I was going to be in a position of overwhelming victory soon enough, I should at least be tolerant and allow this much.

Incidentally, as for why I have so much confidence despite the fact that we were battling it out in Kanbaru's field of basketball, you might be thinking it's a bit strange.

Well, I don't need to tell you too much about it, but for one, just after I went to deliver the letter of challenge to Kanbaru's home yesterday, by chance! Really by chance, though I didn't have any special reason to, in exchange for a snack I had Shinobu drink some of my blood, so my body's capabilities had been raised to beyond ordinary, and since it's not unrelated, I guess I'll mention it.

Unfair?

Perhaps.

However, I decided to think that I had simply descended into the evil ways for the sake of my junior, and made the question of fairness become rather ambiguous.

"Now, Kanbaru! Let's go!"

"Yeah!"

And with a dribble, I attacked Kanbaru—and I can't really remember what happened after that.

It was that chronic disease that would overcome me like what happened when I spotted Hachikuji, i.e. that memory loss thing that's been going around recently.

Eh, you mean it's not going around anymore?

Well, I forgot about that too.

What I was certain of was, after two hours, the scoreboard read 120 to 0, and far from a double score, it was showing a skunk.

A basketball skunk, that is.

Was that possible?

"Well, if you called it a whitewash, then somehow it feels like you didn't lose…"

"Araragi-senpai, you're being surprisingly positive, huh?"

Sweating profusely after having moved around so much, Kanbaru spoke to me hanging my head in shame on the court. If you looked closely, she was only holding the ball with her left hand. What kind of a grip does she have?

"But really, it's amazing that you were able to play for two hours straight. Although, that might sound like I'm consoling you."

"… If you think that way then you should've gone a little easier on me."

120 to 0.

She had scored one point every minute—if I said it like that, I wonder if it would sound like I had fought bravely to some extent. But even that sounds hopelessly positive, doesn't it. My mind was spinning. As was my vision.

"What do you mean, going easy?"

Kanbaru laughed.

"It's been so long since I could play basketball at my full power, so why would I do something like that?"

"…"

"With my left arm like this, the only one who could be my opponent would be Araragi-senpai, who has the power of a vampire."

Thanks, Kanbaru said.

While she was carrying the basketball in one hand—she bowed her head deeply.

I didn't say anything.

Jeez.

Really, she interprets anything and everything to be good for herself, this junior does—the truth is, after being separated from basketball for so long recently you were looking down, and yet you were acting like you were energetic as usual and it was intolerable, and Senjougahara had started worrying, though I only worried for a little bit.

But I was able to see the basketball club's ace play from the nearest of the nearest special seat. I was able to see that dunk that had no forgiveness for her opponent who was a senior, and that vivid, blissful smile that she wore—

Even I was able to feel happy because of it.

Well, to be honest, I really did want to win, but even so, I suppose today was the best day.

… By the way, she had so audaciously moved around the court that I had ended up seeing what was beneath her skirt.

Let's just keep that our little secret.

NADEKO POOL

Bakemonogatari Anime Complete Guidebook
27 October 2010

Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Translation: Eagle Translations

Sengoku said that she wanted me to teach her how to swim, so we went to the public pool that Sunday. I can't even remember the last time I went to a public pool. The pool was a little too far to go by bicycle, so we ended up taking the bus.

"But Sengoku, if you want to learn how to swim, couldn't you just ask Karen or Kanbaru to teach you?" I asked as we rode side by side on the bus.

"I-I guess so." Sengoku faltered slightly. "I would feel bad wasting their time on something so silly."

What's with the lowly attitude? And more importantly, is she saying she doesn't mind wasting my time? I may not look like it, but I am aiming to get into college. I have to study for entrance exams, you know. Time is studies.

"Also, aren't you a good swimmer, Koyomi-onii-chan? You said so before, right?"

"Well, I don't want to brag about it, but I'm not too bad."

That was not me trying to show off to a girl in middle school. I am actually pretty good.

"When we were kids my sisters and I would go swimming in the river. They were so impressed by the way I was swimming up and down the river they called me a kappa."[6]

"That's so cool!" Sengoku nodded with an uncharacteristic vigor. "I hope someone takes my glass ball!"[7]

This girl's sense of humor is really peculiar sometimes… Case in point being that she thinks it's cool to be nicknamed "Kappa." (Actually, I was hoping she would riff on that.) Maybe she is getting it from Kanbaru. If so, I'm going to have to have a little talk with that junior of mine.

"Can you not swim, Sengoku?"

"If you're going to show me how to do it, Koyomi-onii-chan… No, Nadeko can't swim."

"What sort of reason is that?" Her reasoning seemed backwards to me.

"I use a kickboard at school for swimming class."

"That imagery barely gets by the censors."

Imagery of Nadeko in general is always risky.

In any case, at some point during our inane conversation, we had arrived at our destination.

While the pool was fairly out of the way, it's not like the bus was taking dirt roads to get there. I don't remember the ride being particularly bumpy, but Sengoku kept bumping into me and leaning on me, and now my shoulder was bothering me (what a shoulder tackle!), but I don't think it will be enough to affect my swimming.

After we bought our tickets, we went to our separate changing rooms.

---

[6] A *kappa* (河童, "river child") is a demon found in traditional Japanese folklore, said to be the size of a child and inhabiting ponds and rivers.

[7] In the folklore surrounding the *kappas*, it is said that they try to lure victims and drown them. One of their goals in doing so is to gain power by taking their *shirikodama* (尻子玉), a mythical ball said to contain the soul and located inside the anus.

The scent of chlorine that lingered outside of the locker room became even stronger upon entering the changing area. I suppose it was a fondly nostalgic smell. Swimming in the river aside, it had been a really long time since I had been in a pool, let alone a public pool.

Naoetsu High School is really only focused on getting students into college, so I don't even have a school pool to go to. Now that I think about it, I haven't gone swimming since I entered high school.

Remembering this, I was now blanking on how to swim. While I wasn't 100% confident, I figure swimming is just like riding a bike; I'm sure it will come back to me when I get in the water.

I'll have to show Sengoku my stellar flip turns.

While I don't want to be a show-off, I don't see the harm in flaunting one's skills every now and then. Sengoku is one of the few people who look up to me (by the way, Kanbaru is not one of those people), so I need to take full advantage of chances like this.

I changed into the new boardshorts that Tsukihi helped me to pick out at the mall yesterday. I then put my stuff in a coin locker (the kind that will return your 100-yen coin when you put the key back in), strapped the key to my wrist, and headed toward the pool.

There was a shower you walk through to get to the pool area.

When I went through showers like this in elementary school, I would pretend to be a monk meditating under a waterfall. Remembering such an embarrassing thing was slightly traumatizing. In front of me was an eight-lane, fifty-meter swimming pool.

Talk about overkill. What a waste of taxpayer money.

There were surprisingly few people for the weekend. However, despite the patrons being spread out all over the pool, their collective attention was focused on one spot. Naturally, my attention was pulled in that direction. To be precise, my attention was drawn to the girl standing there, drawn to Sengoku Nadeko.

It was really impressive that she was able to change quicker than me, being a girl and all. From looking at her, I would have guessed she would be a bit on the slow side, but maybe she is a bit quicker than she looks. Ah,

maybe she was wearing her suit under her clothes the whole time. Before I had time to give the matter any more thought—all of my attention was now fixated on what was in front of me.

"…"

If I had to say what I would picture for a scene titled "Together with Nadeko at the pool", I would have definitely imagined Sengoku wearing her school swimsuit. The fact that this was the first thing I thought of probably means that Kanbaru is rubbing off on me. Well, then again, it wouldn't be that strange to expect a middle schooler to wear her school swimsuit to the pool.

But Sengoku's outfit blew my expectations out of the water. She was not wearing her school swimsuit.

Let me be a little more precise: the suit she was wearing was not a school swimsuit, but rather an extremely revealing string bikini that left very, very little to the imagination. I had never seen a bikini this extreme, even on gravure swimsuit models.

She was practically naked.

Ultra-low friction bodysuits that cover as much of the body as possible to reduce drag are all the rage in the competitive swimming world right now. Whether these bodysuits should be considered legal swimwear was for a big topic for discussion. Whether or not Sengoku's outfit could be considered legal swimwear was also debatable, but for the opposite reason. You might say the design was making big waves in the swimming world. It might be a little mean, but maybe I'll coin the phrase, "A single pebble makes a pond ripple; a Sengoku makes a big splash."[8]

"Um… Koyomi-onii-chan."

Sengoku's trademark bangs were tied up and out of the way, probably to make it easier to swim. She was averting eye contact and looking at the ground, as usual. She stood there idly, looking rather suspicious. As soon

[8] He is making a pun using the phrase, "A stone (一石, *isseki*) dropped in a pond causes ripples", saying "A Sengoku (千石, "thousand stones") dropped make a big splash."

as she saw me standing there frozen midstride, I could see relief wash over her face as she shuffled up to me.

The words "Stay away from me!" were dangerously close to slipping out of my mouth, but I managed to hold them back.

"Whoa, Koyomi-onii-chan. You're so muscular! How wonderful."

"Ah, oh, yeah." I didn't know how to respond to Sengoku commenting on my body.

Slightly off topic, but this svelte body of mine is a side effect of being a vampire, so I can't really take any pride in it. It's like I'm doping.

"… And your swim trunks are really cool."

"Ah… I feel bad they're so normal, er, well, they're just something I picked up yesterday."

"Really? Me too. I bought mine yesterday too. What do you think? How is it? I thought I'd try to be a little more adventurous."

"Hmm… Well, it is pretty adventurous."

At a loss for words, I ended up sounding like the captain from *Go Go Sentai Boukenger*.[9] Actually, her swimsuit was way more adventurous than any of their adventures. Where on Earth did she get her hands on such a suit anyways? I don't think you could find something like that at a department store. Moreover, who the hell sold this to a kid in middle school, anyways?

Unable to look her in the eye, I had to look away from her entirely.

A minute ago I said something that made it sound like everyone at the pool was looking at Sengoku, but in fact nobody was actually looking. Rather, everyone was purposely avoiding looking at her. It was like their eyes were swimming around in their sockets to find something else to look at. How appropriate for a pool.

The public pool is the kind of place where parents bring their kids, so maybe this was like watching TV at the dinner table with your family when a sex scene comes on. No, it was more than just the awkward eroticism, it

[9] A sentai series (like *Power Rangers*) where the heroes carry a title containing the word "Adventurer".

was like you were committing a crime by looking, and no one wanted anything to do with it. There was an air of discomfort floating around the pool.

Sengoku was still in the middle of puberty, so her body hadn't quite filled out. You could tell by her visible ribcage and hipbones that the faint outline of her abs was probably not the result of hard work, but rather a lack of meat on her bones. It was hard to look at.

If asked for my honest opinion, I would have to say "kind of pitiful".

"So what do you think?"

Sengoku asked again, this time with a slightly uneasy look in her eyes.

No. There is no way I could say "pitiful".

By the look in her eyes, I could clearly see that she was starting to worry that her huge adventure was turning out to be huge failure. She looked like she was on the verge of tears.

This isn't good. At this rate, this episode is going to end up as a dark chapter in Sengoku's middle school diary. Telling a girl her outfit is a fashion disaster is definitely going to leave some damage. I'm such an idiot. Why couldn't I understand a timid girl's desire to transform herself into a daring extrovert? Think properly.

I remembered the incident where she was bound by invisible snakes. Maybe it was a good thing that she is able to show off so much skin. In that case, I should praise her. I should compliment her. This isn't the time to be worried about what society thinks of me. I don't care anymore. At this point I wish I would have worn a banana hammock in anticipation of Sengoku's actions.

"Uhhh, it looks really good, Sengoku. You really hit it out of the park. You'll be on the leading edge of summer fashion this year. You could even wear it to your school's pool."

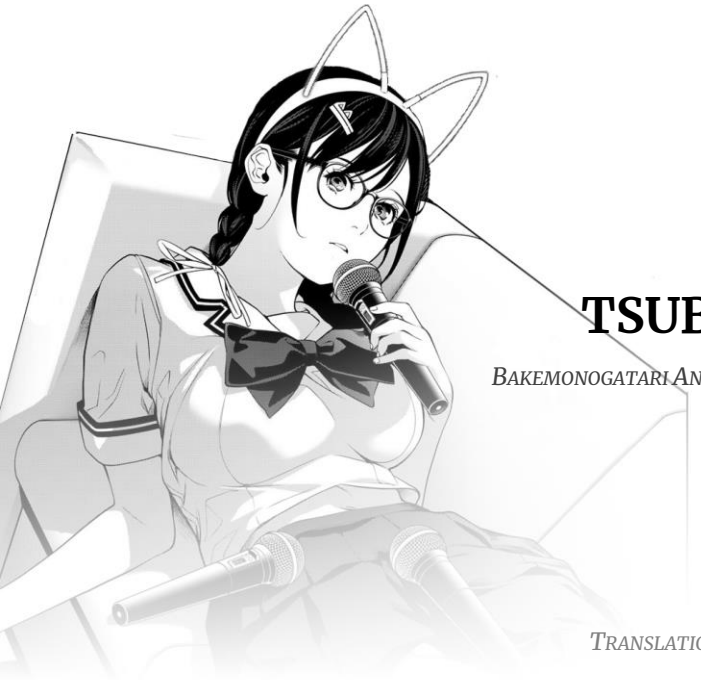
"Hmm. Okay, If Koyomi-onii-chan says so." Sengoku said beaming.

Her smiling face made me happy too.

It seemed today was the best day.

… By the way, after that—at the pool that seemed to be getting less and less crowded—I made a huge fool of myself in front of the middle school girl who admired me so much.

You see… Vampires can't swim.



TSUBASA SONG

Bakemonogatari Anime Complete Guidebook
27 October 2010
Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Translation: Polaris Translations

That Sunday, instead of being woken up by my two little sisters Karen and Tsukihi, I awoke from the ringtone that sounded out when Hanekawa's text message arrived. Usually I would boast of my ability to completely ignore the melody of my cell phone, but there was some merit in waking up at the time, and if I do say so myself I was very shrewd for doing so, because the sender was Hanekawa. Well, as always her message was incredibly formal, and furthermore the length was by no means short, and it needed some time to be deciphered, but if I translated it into a style that anyone could understand,

"Let's go on a date ♥"

was the impression I got.

… No, I'm not kidding.

Don't worry, I haven't gone insane.

So I canceled all the plans I had for that day (this time I'm kidding, since I didn't have any plans anyway) and pedaled my bike toward the designated meeting place.

Hanekawa had, as usual, arrived earlier than I did (and, as usual, was wearing her school uniform. Well, school uniform dates have recently been pretty common).

"He~y! Then, shall we go?"

Like that, with a very comfortable way of smiling, she led the way.

Following along while thinking such thoughts as I wonder where we're going, it'll probably end with us at the library again, but wasn't the library closed on Sundays? But to my surprise, on the way we boarded a train (I left my bicycle at the station), and when we finally arrived, it was a karaoke box that was open in the morning.

"… Karaoke?"

"Yep!"

While I was unable to reply, Hanekawa said "Just the two of us. Three hours, please" and promptly got us through the reception desk. What's with this coercive skill? Rather than a date, it seemed as if she were following a quite boyish date plan, where the guy would be like "be quiet and just follow me" with a pace that didn't even ask for confirmation or consent, and the girl would be enchanted. I seriously want to follow her example.

And then there was the singing.

Hanekawa-san sang with enthusiasm.

As embarrassing as it is to say, my experience with regard to karaoke was rather slim, or perhaps I should say my body was resistant to the very act of singing a song in front of Hanekawa, so when she got tired of me fiddling with the remote control, she said,

"Then, I'll start",

and took the mic in hand and began to sing. Because I never input my own song due to hesitation and embarrassment,

"Then, I'll sing again, okay?" "I'll sing again, okay?" "Again, okay?"

And with that, it was eternally Hanekawa's turn.

I may as well call it a solo live show.

Though it was a situation that couldn't be helped even if some outsider came and told me "What the hell are you doing?", well, I wanted to hear one more time.

I wanted to hear Hanekawa's singing one more time.

She was so good I thought I would die.

If taking the skill level of singing and adding "I thought I would die" as a modifier doesn't make any sense to you, then let's amend it to "she was so good I thought I would be revived". For me, the vampire who was revived no matter how many times he died, this was certainly the perfect metaphor.

It appears that Hanekawa thought that it was a breach of etiquette to sing songs that other people in the room did not know, because each and every song she sang was a famous pop song that even someone like me would know, even though they were all songs filled with major keys that anyone would get tired of hearing, so I was impressed by Hanekawa's admirable performance.

Therefore, with me listening in ecstasy, there was not a moment for me to even turn the pages of the song book.

I instinctively fixed my posture.

"Thank you very much. Huh? Eh? Araragi-kun, have you still not chosen a song yet? In that case, I'll go again."

"Wait a second wait a second wait a second, Hanekawa-san. Even though it's fantastic that you're in such high spirits, just wait for a second."

I stopped Hanekawa's arm reaching for the remote control. If she sang for me any longer, I would be so moved I might actually cry.

That would be bad, right?

"Intermission. Let's have an intermission. Let's calm down for a moment, let's go back to our initial state of mind."

"? Although I'm fine with that."

At last, she set down the mic and sat down.

She had been standing while singing.

She was the class president who would dance while singing.

"But I'm surprised… I didn't think karaoke was part of your image, Hanekawa. How many times have you come here, to be able to let out your voice like that?"

"Eh? No, but this is my first time at karaoke."

"…"

At Hanekawa's puzzled response, I too became puzzled.

"Your first time? Eh, but it's like you're really used to using the remote control, though."

"For this, you can just figure it out just by looking at it, right?"

Hanekawa said so quite matter-of-factly.

Looking at Hanekawa like this, she was probably the type of person who didn't read manuals, either.

Or should I say, a person who didn't even need to read manuals.

"Eeh… But, but, your singing, I thought it was good, but even without something so opinionated, everything on the screen has been 100 points, hasn't it?"

"I don't know, even if you say that. Isn't it made so that it shows 100 points no matter who sings? Like a fortune that only has 'great luck' in it."

"Is that so…?"

I don't really know about it, but I heard that the grading standard for karaoke had incredibly severe judgement… At any rate, this girl, she can only get 100 points even when it's not a school test, huh.

That's unreasonable.

"It's the first time I've sung by myself in front of others since music class in elementary school, so I don't think I'm singing that well. Really, Araragi-kun, stop flattering me."

"Like I said, it's not like that. What kind of person are you, anyway? Just say that you confined yourself in here yesterday for six hours of intensive training for today's sake and be praised obediently!"

By speaking my mind like this, I was really calming myself down.

Emotion that has gone too far can only come out as fear.

"To begin with, Hanekawa, you weren't looking at the screen while singing, huh."

"Hm? Because I had the lyrics memorized."

"I'm not trying to find fault in you, but why can't you be normal even at karaoke?"

After I said that, I sighed and fell silent.

Why can't she be normal.

As a matter of fact, for Hanekawa, that was a serious worry she had, and that's why, as a result, it was twice that a cat had rampaged—on Golden Week and just a couple of days ago, twice that nothing could be done to stop the story of the cat from occurring. Why did I say something so careless—but, Hanekawa did not even grant me the time to regret like that, saying,

"That's a good question~"

and nodded normally.

"But I thought hard about what happened recently, and I realized that trying to be normal in itself isn't really normal, right?"

"…"

"Right. There are no dreams in the objective of trying to become normal."

And that's why I ended up seeing nightmares not once but twice—said Hanekawa, as if telling herself that rather than me.

"Also, normal people wish that they weren't normal, don't they? I've realized now that striving to become normal in itself is something that isn't normal. And now in that matter I've gotten all mixed up. And with that, Araragi-kun, I'm sorry for troubling you with all these things."

Though she seemed like she was joking, for Hanekawa, it seemed like she truly thought so from the bottom of her heart as well. "Though I don't think I've done anything wrong up until now—but I don't think that was a good thing. Being nothing but right all the time isn't really the right thing. I don't want to shut myself out anymore, and as it is, if I don't demonstrate more of my individuality, then one day I may fall prey to the cat again."

"… That's true."

Yes, it could happen.

After all—the cat was like another Hanekawa, and to go further the cat was Hanekawa herself, and no matter how many times we borrow Shinobu's power to repel it—it will never disappear from within Hanekawa.

Oshino had said that twenty years old was the standard—but Hanekawa couldn't just wait until then.

All the way until then—and all the way after that.

Hanekawa definitely had to face the cat inside of her. Not shutting it out—but accepting it as part of herself.

"So it's something like that, okay? From now on, instead of storing up all this stress and resentment, I'd like to try various ways of stress relief from time to time. And today's the first for that."

"Hm. Ah, that's why."

That's why we came to karaoke.

Singing out in such a loud voice could certainly serve as stress relief.

"What, so it was just that? You should've just told me that. I was so sure that this was supposed to be a date, so I was feeling really happy."

"I never wrote anything like that in the text message, though."

"Is that so."

"You were reading too much in between the lines. I wouldn't do anything like that when you have Senjougahara-san."

Said Hanekawa, smiling.

"But, you're right. I probably should have just told you earlier. I mean, I could have just come on my own, but really since it was my first time it was a little scary."

"Oh, so you do get nervous. So it's the same for Hanekawa, huh. Well, I get what's going on now. Whenever you want a distraction for some stress relief, just call me. Like today, I'll come along any time."

"Really? Is it okay?"

"Of course. Would I ever turn down a request from Hanekawa?"

"Then, I wonder if I should request something right now?"

And saying that, from a cute pouch (that didn't really match her school uniform) that hung from her shoulders, Hanekawa took out a pair of scissors used to cut hair.

"This has absolutely nothing to do with Araragi-kun, but recently my heart was broken. So in order to get over that,"

She spoke with a smile.

"These braids, could you cut them off in a single stroke for me?"

"…"

It appears that was the main point of today.

Incidentally, you could say that the source of Hanekawa's stress could be me, as well.

For the sake of stress relief you'd need to do some severe action, and I guess this could also be revenge for my harassment, but anyway, the impish, catlike smile that Hanekawa gave as she handed me the scissors seemed, though not completely, just a little bit like she was enjoying herself, and that she was happy.

Because she made me happy as well, I couldn't help it.

Today was, as I thought, the best day.

… By the way, it wasn't just some temporary joke: Hanekawa really had me cut her two braids. She forced me to give her a bob cut. I couldn't believe it. So as to not bother the shop, she had even prepared a hand cleaner in advance, so this was clearly premeditated. Although Hanekawa of course went to a proper hairdresser afterwards to straighten things out.

But those two braids are still in my room now.

HITAGI NECK

Nisemonogatari Anime Complete Guidebook
27 September 2012
Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Translation: Haremless

Apparently Senjougahara Hitagi had been waiting eagerly for this day to come. As to what "this day" means, it would be the day when I introduced her as my girlfriend to my two sisters, Araragi Karen and Araragi Tsukihi.

"Why were you so excited about today anyway…? Are you actually a big fan of the Fire Sisters?"

Now that I think about it, Senjougahara did know about my sisters before she met me. Of course, at the time, I was just terrified that someone I didn't know knew everything about my family.

"You could say that, Koyokoyo."

Said Senjougahara.

Apparently "Koyokoyo" was referring to me.

I was absolutely opposed to that nickname. Actually, it was more than just being opposed to it, I hated it, but she stubbornly refused to stop calling me it.

Well, if I just told myself that her stubbornness is just another part of her rehabilitation, if I just forced myself to think of it that way, I could just barely put up with it.

Or maybe it was her way of getting back at me for when I call her "Gahara-san" once in a while.

If that's the case, I guess it's a pretty cute way of getting back at me—I hope that I'm not just rambling on about our lovey-dovey couple moments.

"When I hear the rumors about them it reminds me of Kanbaru and myself back in middle school."

"Hmm, the Valhalla Duo."

"But it's not just that, I'm really happy that you're introducing me to your family, Koyokoyo. I feel like I'm finally being accepted as your girlfriend."

"'Accepted as your girlfriend'…"

Did she really say that?

She's gotten a lot gentler than I expected, even after her rehabilitation.

I wouldn't say that I really want the old snappy Senjougahara back, but this really makes it feel like time flies.

"Weren't you happy when I introduced you to my father, Koyokoyo?"

"Yeah, I was."

I answered so quickly it might have sounded suspicious.

Senjougahara's father.

Mr. Senjougahara.

How would I describe my meeting with that man who was aging quite well—memorable? A bit traumatic? It really had been unendurable, which was probably why I answered so quickly.

Although now, when I think that Senjougahara trusted me enough to introduce me to her father even before her rehabilitation, it does make me quite happy.

I'd be lying if I said it didn't.

But I'd also be lying if I said it was all just happy times…

"That's why I'm so happy that I'll get to meet Karen-san and Tsukihi-san. Although I still felt like it was pretty out of the blue when you called me up right after I got home from Bon."[10]

"Well, there are some pretty complicated reasons behind that, mysterious reasons you could say, in any case I didn't really have any other choice, so…"

I really didn't have any other choice.

If you want to read more about that, you can refer to the other short stories in the booklet, but it was a bit hard to explain to Senjougahara.

"To be honest, my sisters forced me to."

"Forced you…"

"You better watch out, Senjougahara. They seem sort of opposed to you. I never introduced you to them before because I was afraid that you'd try to hurt them. Well I'm not worried about that anymore, but now I'm worried the opposite might happen."

"…"

"Just for today, Senjougahara. I authorize you to arm yourself with your stationery."

Senjougahara shook her head.

"Stationery is for studying, not for hurting people."

"… Well, you're right but."

"I'll never write 'stationery' as 'stationary' like a 'stationary turret' again."[11]

"I've never seen you do that before…"

And that's actually a really good pun.

Why didn't I think of that?

"You know, Araragi-kun,"

Senjougahara paused, then said:

"I've always wanted a little sister."

---

[10] *Bon* (盆) is a festival that starts on August 15 where people honor their ancestors' spirits.

[11] The original pun is Hitagi replacing the character 房 (*bou*) in the word 文房具 (*bunbougu*, "stationery") with 防 (*bou*, "defense").

"… I can't give you one, you know?"

"I don't mean in real life, it was just a wish for me. Maybe that's why I always liked the juniors like Kanbaru so much. But with my parents ending up the way they did, that's not possible. But I still think about it, maybe if I had a little sister my family wouldn't have been torn apart."

"…"

"Maybe if that were true, I could've introduced you to my mother. Well, just introducing you isn't really the point…"

"I get what you're saying."

Actually, maybe I don't.

Just because she's my girlfriend, because we're boyfriend and girlfriend, doesn't mean that we can understand all of each other's feelings. But I know for sure that Senjougahara must have always wanted to have that sort of normal conversation.

To be normal.

To Senjougahara, who had to go through her youth never being allowed to be normal, maybe just spending our days like this is enough to make her happy. But that doesn't mean she'll be able to take back the things she's lost.

Exactly because they're things that she's lost.

She'll always keep thinking of them.

"I know that just a little while ago, I never would've thought that introducing people to my family or being introduced to someone else's family would make me so happy. I'm sure I would've thought that even if I had a boyfriend, I'd want that to be just a private relationship between the two of us."

"I know…"

Honestly, I would consider myself one of those people.

But now I guess I'm laid back enough to just go along with what Senjougahara wants. The Araragi Koyomi who used to say "I don't need friends, they'd lower my intensity as a human" is gone.

And I'm sure who I am now.

One day he'll be gone too.

"I just wanted to ask you, Koyokoyo. Both of your sisters have boyfriends, right?"

"That's the first time I've heard of it."

"Come on, there's no way you wouldn't know… Besides you're the one who told me after all. You haven't met them before?"

"Yeah, I always run right away."

"Why do you sound so proud when you say that? You should just agree to meet them, and next time it'll be you meeting your sisters' boyfriends."

"Well, if I get the chance…"

I pray that I never do.

Honestly I hope that they break up before I ever have to meet them. I know I'm being close-minded, but that's just how an older brother feels about his little sisters' boyfriends.

Well, if I think of it that way.

No matter how hostile Karen and Tsukihi are to meeting Senjougahara, they're way more mature than me.

"Oh, seems like we're here."

"It'll be my first time going inside."

After a fifteen-minute walk from where we agreed to meet.

Senjougahara and I had arrived at the Araragi house.

Let the Summit begin.

I steeled myself for the worst.

KAREN ARM-LEG

Nisemonogatari Anime Complete Guidebook
27 September 2012
Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Translation: Haremless

Araragi Karen is quite tall. In the sense that she is simply tall, without needing any sort of explanation or sidenote added such as "for a girl", or "for someone in ninth grade" or even "compared to her brother". She was just tall. And even scarier than the most terrifying ghost stories is the fact that even now she's still growing. Setting aside these feelings of terror and fear, these emotional problems, and investigating the "condition" of her height, logically thinking it follows that both her legs and arms are quite long as well.

Like the two youkai, Tenaga and Ashinaga.[12]

I was a bit traumatized when I saw a program about old legends in Japan as a kid. And Araragi Karen could be called a physical embodiment of the two youkai in one. You could say it boils down to her having long arms

[12] A pair of monsters in Japanese folklore. Ashinaga (足長, "long legs") has really long legs and short arms, while Tenaga (手長, "long arms") has long arms and short legs. Tenaga often sits on Ashinaga's shoulders.

and legs, but now she was swinging those rather long arms and legs around wildly.

"Uwaaa

I could still look on the bright side and say that at least this hadn't happened a bit earlier, or else the living room would have faced the added destruction of her ponytail as well.

"C-Calm down Karen-chan. Come on, stop crying, stop shouting, stop throwing things around. You're already in your last year of middle school, next year you'll be in high school. You're acting like a kid crying over some dropped ice crea—guha!"

I was thrown back by Karen's fist, more accurately her backhand, as I tried my best to stop her from struggling.

That punch might have been fatal if I didn't have the increased healing factor from my vampirism. I was pretty lucky that I had just let Shinobu suck some of my blood too.

Man, being immortal really is convenient.

I won't even die from my little sister's tantrums.

"Waaaa

Near the end of summer holiday.

I turned to Karen and, like I told Tsukihi, told her:

"You know, there's actually this girl I've been dating since a little while ago."

And before I could say "I'll introduce her to you when we get a chance" Karen crushed (!?) the dumbbell she had been training with up until a moment ago with a bored look on her face, opened her eyes as wide as they would go and immediately flipped over the sofa she was sitting on as if to crush it to bits.

And with those two arms and legs.

She unleashed her two arms and legs that were long like the Amazon river and started throwing a tantrum.

"Break up with her! Break up with her! Break up with her right now!"

"You sure ask for a lot…"

"Call her right now and break up with her! I'll call her if you can't! I'll tell her you can't go out with her anymore because you love your little sister so much!"

"Damn she's scary…"

I'd never seen this kind of little sister character before.

Araragi Karen used to be the classic example of the "real life little sisters aren't that cute" character. And that had now reached its peak.

What kind of crazy fantasy has a little sister who would make her brother break up with his girlfriend?

"Waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa! How could you get a girlfriend, nii-chan! And you kept it a secret from me!"

"This reaction was way more than I expected…"

I guess for all how much she's trained her body, she completely neglected to train her mind… So she kept on destroying the floor of the Araragi household.

I was ready to get punched, but I never expected her to cry and throw a tantrum…

"Tell me what I'm doing wrong!"

Karen sat up suddenly and glared at me. Her face was covered in tears.

"If it was something to do with sex why didn't you just do it with me!"

"What the hell, that's scary! What she says and what she thinks!"

"I can't believe you already had a girlfriend when you were brushing my teeth like that!"

"I know how people bring that up a lot, but if you really think about it, it was perfectly wholesome, just a brother helping his little sister brush her teeth!"

"Let me see her! Let me see your girlfriend!"

Karen said, choking back her tears.

While still wildly flailing her limbs around.

"I'm going to brush her teeth! I'm going to brush them till they're sparkling clean! I'm going to make sure she knows that I'm the only one allowed to have her teeth brushed by you!"

"…"

Whatever.

You are actually the only person whose teeth I've brushed—in any case.

That was how I became the mediator between Senjougahara and Karen. I don't care what happens afterwards, whether they bring a building down or cause a landslide, although considering they are the Fire Sisters, it's more like whether they burn a building down or start a forest fire.

Karen's tantrums continued on after that.

And all there was to do was patiently wait for them to end.

TSUKIHI ETERNAL

Nisemonogatari Anime Complete Guidebook
27 September 2012
Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Translation: Haremless

It seems like I had forgotten about what kind of personality Araragi Tsukihi had. Even if I had, let's see, gotten careless after winning (?) against Kagenui-san and Yotsugi-chan in our battle, as everyone who's listened to the anime's audio commentaries must know,

"At the end of the summer holiday, I want to introduce my girlfriend to you."

is something I should never have said no matter what to my little sister, considering her personality. Especially knowing there's no way she'd wait until the end of the summer holiday if I told her anyway.

"How long."

Tsukihi said.

She had me kneeling on the floor of her room as she asked me. More importantly, she had her arms crossed in a terrifying pose, looking over me.

"How long were you planning to wait to tell me that."

"Well, how long…"

She was terrifying.

As to what exactly was so terrifying, my little sister was already holding an awl in one hand. You better hurry up and put that back in the toolbox or they'll start selling it in a set with your figurine.

Of course, that awl may as well have been a toy after fighting against Kagenui-san. The problem wasn't the awl, but the fact that my little sister was holding it and standing over me with her arms crossed itself was terrifying.

And the fact that Tsukihi was poking her own arm with the sharp end of the awl also was a bit scary. She was just scraping against the skin so there was no blood, but I could feel the pressure radiating from her just by looking at her "Can you tell that I'm annoyed now?" sort of pose.

"You had a girlfriend? The hell were you thinking taking my first kiss when you had a girlfriend?"

"You should watch your language, Tsukihi-chan. You're a girl, so you should be a bit gentler with your words or people will look at you funny."

"O brother of mine, how durst you have been to place your lips against mine and take my first kiss, when there is already another woman who waits for you."

"…"

Durst you have been? That doesn't quite sound right.

I wanted to tell her that, but I would probably end up with an awl stuck in my eyeball if I did. No choice, I decided to ignore it.

"I'm not sure that really counts as 'gentle'…"

"You takie my fiwst kish?"

"Fiwst kish."

Hearing her trying to sound cute made me even more afraid of the awl… Wow, awls sure are something.

It seems like they can just take any sort of character and completely overwrite it… Of course awls should only be used the way they were supposed to.

"Let me think, are you supposed to use them to chip off ice to put in your whiskey?"

"That's an icepick. Don't mix them up."

"They look almost the same though…"

Don't mix them up with a gimlet either.

"About the same as somen and cold noodles."

"How long."

Tsukihi must have realized I was intentionally saying something she could easily comment on to try and change the flow of the conversation, so she forced it back.

"How long were you planning to wait to tell me that."

"W-Well, you see, I was planning to tell you by the end of summer holiday… I mean, tomorrow! I was going to tell you tomorrow. Come on, Tsukihi-chan, you just had to ask about it. You ruined the surprise party I was planning."

"You were going to have a surprise party to tell us you had a girlfriend… Do you think you're some celebrity? Onii-chan."

Ha, Tsukihi-chan mocked me.

That wasn't cute.

"I bet you just told me because it happened to slip out or you just felt like it and by tomorrow you won't even remember you promised to tell me."

"I-Isn't that a bit prejudiced… Have I ever broken a promise with you?"

"I don't think you've ever kept one of your promises. Or kept your little sister safe."

"I have kept you safe before!"

I just did today!

I did everything I could today to protect you, I even died a few times… But it would be hard to tell her that here and now.

"Have you? When was it? When was it? What time, what minute, what second, whatchamacallit, how many times did the Earth spin?"

"Guh…"

It's so frustrating!

Why can't I even win an argument against her!

"When did you even start dating? And when did you start keeping that a secret from me? Didn't we decide we wouldn't keep any secrets between us anymore?"

"I'm pretty sure we aren't two kids who made that promise while supporting each other as the only people we have left to depend on after our parents died…"

After putting that out there, I said:

"Since Mother's Day."

"Mother's Day? Hahahahahahahaha!"

Tsukihi burst into laughter.

Because it's Mother's Day, so "hahahahahahaha".[13]

That wasn't even funny, and that laugh made me shudder.

"I see, I see. So after you had that fight with Karen-chan you ran out of the house, and while the whole Araragi family couldn't even look each other in the eye, you were out there picking up some chick?"

"'Picking up a chick'…"

Couldn't you have put it in a nicer way?

Actually, why are you saying "the whole Araragi family"?

I'm part of the family too, you know.

"What? That's what you were doing isn't it? On Mother's Day of all days, on that day of celebration that only comes around once a year, when we were supposed to be showing our mom our gratitude, you were flirting with some girl weren't you? You chose some young girl over your family."

"I can't believe what a bad kid you turned out to be…"

'Some young girl'? Well, she is young.

She's in the same grade as me, so she'd be eighteen.

"I bet Karen-chan's going to be so disappointed when she hears this. She was so happy because she thought you'd actually grown up a little after you apologized to her, but it turns out you were so careless because you were happy you got yourself a girlfriend."

---

[13] The Japanese word for "mother" (母) is pronounced *haha*.

"How would you know I didn't care? Don't just decide that for me!"

"It was a celebration but you turned it into a carelebration instead."[14]

"Damn it…"

She thinks she can just say whatever pops into her head because she's holding an awl.

"So, since then you've been keeping us in the dark about it the whole time? During breakfast and dinner, you never told me that you had a girlfriend. You were just thinking about how much better the food tasted knowing that I was completely in the dark about your girlfriend and secretly laughing at me in your head weren't you."

"Do you really think that there's an older brother out there who would do that?"

"You! You nonexistent big brother! How could you keep a secret from me! I knew it, you haven't been wrestling with us when we fight because you're saving yourself for your girlfriend!"

"It's not like I wrestle with her anyway… And besides, even if I was just careless because I was happy, it's because I met a fifth-grade girl, not because I got a girlfriend."

"How long!"

Was the gist of the conversation as Tsukihi kept asking me about my girlfriend all the way until the morning.

[14] Tsukihi previously called Koyomi "careless" (おざなり, *ozanari*). Here, she says オザーナリー (*ozaanarii*) to make it sound like アニバーサリー (*anibaasarii,* "anniversary").

SHINOBU HOUSE

Nisemonogatari Anime Complete Guidebook
27 September 2012
Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Translation: Haremless

It was only on the night after the meeting held in the living room of the Araragi house—between the couple Araragi Koyomi and Senjougahara Hitagi, and the Fire Sisters Araragi Karen and Araragi Tsukihi—later to be known as "Gahara Summit" had ended, that Oshino Shinobu appeared, seeming rather displeased.

Shinobu, who despite being nocturnal by no means would always appear at night, did in fact appear as if it were the most normal thing.

Almost as if waiting for the exact moment when I decided to fall onto my bed with a sense of relief after more or less successfully making it through the actually extremely difficult meeting.

"Aaaah…"

The tired-sounding voice came out of her mouth as she crawled out from the shadows.

What's with that voice?

It's like she wants me to pay attention to her.

"I could barely watch that. Pretending to be friends, pretending to be family. I hate that stuff the most."

"Uuugh."

Oh boy.

I've got another young lady with a "charming" personality on my hands now.

I never would have guessed that there'd be a bonus level after completing that serious discussion of ours.

"You can pretend it was so much trouble for you, but I saw you with that grin on your face trying to get the conversation going between your girlfriend and your sisters. Aaah, I can't stand it, I simply can't."

Shinobu said, criticizing me not directly, but indirectly, disguising her rant as her talking to herself by shrugging and stretching out both of her arms in an overexaggerated motion.

Mumbling on and on, complaining on and on.

"To see the warrior who drove me so close to the edge grow so soft. Why don't you just get your own soap opera already. You don't belong in any youkai stories anymore. Go on spouting that tepid crap to those girls all you like."

"You sure say some feisty things…"

And even during spring break I didn't even do that much to her. Now she's starting to make stuff up just to get at me.

"Aaah, I don't even know anymoooore. I guess in the end your family and your girlfriend or whatever is more important to you after aaaall."

Shinobu continued without even glancing my way. It almost seemed like she was just talking to herself, but loud enough that I would definitely be able to hear her. Like she was trying to implicitly ask "Can you even call yourself a vampire doing all this?".

"What was that again? I remember you saying something. That's right, I remember you saying some really cool line. Man, that made my heart beat sooo fast. I can't imagine someone who'd say they cared about their girlfriend or their family saying something that would get my heart beating sooo fast."

"W-What are you talking about?"

"'If you die tomorrow, I'm fine with my life ending tomorrow too' or something, or were you just trying to sweet-talk me."

Since she had answered my question, it seemed like she wasn't just talking to herself after all. But still Shinobu refused to look my way.

"But from what I heard at that meeting you just had, it won't matter whether I die. You'll just go on living your normal life. I'm sure. 100%."

"Well, actually Shinobu-san. That's not true really…"

"Then die right here right now. I'm already dying from a disease right now so hurry up and die. You can't? You can't, can you. There you go, liar."

"…"

Just like the eight-year-old she looked like.

But actually, this is kinda cute in its own way.

"Just listen to me, Shinobu. That's not how it is. I know that maybe I was hard to watch today, but I wasn't trying to ignore you."

For some reason I started to try and cheer up Shinobu. I was forced to. Why did it end up like this?

"I thought it was obvious, your bond with me is the most precious thing in the world to me—"

"Ha, that's what all men say when they're cheating. Well fine! You must be the modern version of the main character in *Life of an Amorous Man*."[15]

"There's no way you've heard of that book before. I bet you're just guessing based on the name."

Actually.

Even if you don't know about the book, the title already tells you enough anyway.

---

[15] A novel written in 1682 detailing the numerous sexual exploits of a man named Yonosuke in several short stories.

I actually found it pretty interesting that the blond young girl Shinobu-chan would know about the famous works of Ihara Saikaku.[16] I wonder where all her knowledge even comes from.

Normally Shinobu just spends her time inside my shadow, and apparently it's a pretty large space so she spends her time reading or playing games… I'm starting to wonder what kinds of books Shinobu reads.

"How about this, my master. If I, your girlfriend, your giant sister and your minuscule sister were all hanging from the side of a cliff and you could only save one of us, who would you save?"

"…"

She's so goddamn annoying!

This little brat's so goddamn annoying!

I felt myself straining under the weight of how annoying she was and said,

"I don't think I could make that choice. Everyone's life is equal so there's no way I could choose between them!"

trying to act cool while dodging the question by giving her lip service.

"Stop trying to act cool while dodging the question by giving me lip service."

Said Shinobu, evidently unsatisfied with my answer.

I don't even know what to say after she just saw completely through my plan and threw it right back at my face…

"Answer me. Who would you pick? I might have to leave your shadow depending on your answer."

"Can you even leave it…?"

"Of course I can. I just so happened to stumble into your shadow and started living there anyway. You could say I'm like Odysseus in Circe's mansion."[17]

---

[16] Famous Japanese poet from the 17th century. He created the "floating world" genre of Japanese prose.

[17] The original line compares it to a *mayoiga* (迷家), a house which was said to bring good fortune to travelers who visited it. Circe is a sorceress who

"I guess that explains why you have all those books…"

In reality, those were just books she took from my bookshelf. But if there really were a bookshelf you could just keep taking from and there would always be more books, that would really be heaven to any bookworm. Anyway…

Hmm.

What should I do about this?

In any case, I should just tell her "Shinobu, obviously I'd save you even if I had to leave Senjougahara and Karen-chan and Tsukihi-chan behind, even if I had to use them as a shield, obviously I'd save you!" and get myself out of this question for now… But really.

When I'm already talking to someone with this kind of mindset, I'd really just be giving her lip service, or trying to act cool, or dodging the question… and then she'd see right through me—I mean throw a bunch of false accusations at me and say "Ha! You're trying to sweet-talk me again!"

So, where does this leave me.

Well, there is only one model answer.

"I would reach out to…"

I said.

I said with a dashing look.

"Hanekawa. Hanekawa Tsubasa. If I really was in that kind of situation, I'd reach out to Hanekawa—and ask for her help."

"…"

Shinobu looked at me with an astounded look on her face for a little while, then afterwards,

"Ka ka."

She began to laugh.

She finally laughed.

---

provides for all of Odysseus' worldly desires during a year he spends feasting and drinking before he resumes his journey back home after the Trojan War.

"Well, if you mention her I guess I have to agree. It really is convenient for you to just pull out her name."

But really that was just another way of getting myself out of the question, and in terms of who I save or don't save, even if I get someone else's help, in the end people can only save themselves, and people can never save other people. Maybe I wouldn't be able to save any of the four, or five, of them, but at least for the time being I managed to stop Shinobu from leaving—and from then on just like before,

Shinobu would keep living in my shadow.

TSUBASA BOARD

Yomiuri Shimbun
6 July 2013

Onimonogatari BD/DVD vol. 1
23 April 2014

Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

I'm the other side to the cute cat.
Flexible like a cat,
Stiff like a human, a tale of struggle and suffering.

Translation: Ryoukugan

In the final volume of his four-part *Odyssey Series*, *3001: The Final Odyssey*, Arthur C. Clarke defines an "intellectual" as such: "someone who has been educated beyond their intelligence". As someone who has lived her entire life cramming knowledge and information into her body just as someone who is starving seeks to live, when I read this definition for the first time, it felt as if my own name were called out. Without a doubt.

Receiving an education isn't necessarily a good thing, nor is having knowledge. Only "knowing" something is exactly the same as not knowing it.

"No, sometimes knowing too much might be a far greater disadvantage, Hanekawa-san. Hanekawa Tsubasa-san. When you're bound by superficial knowledge, you can't do anything. That doesn't happen to most people", Senjougahara said in response to my lead-in.

"That said, we live in an information-overloaded society. If you try asking one thing you'll be taught ten;[18] you'll be taught things you don't even want to know. These days, the right to teach others is valued even more than the right to learn, and we have a system where no one is allowed to live in ignorance and indifference. No one even cares about me personally, the information just keeps flooding in. I can't stand all the little tips the world feels like it has to give." Senjougahara continued, seemingly overwhelmed.

Once, a schemer fell for his own scheme, but I think these days intellectuals fall for knowledge.[19] There's no need to even make schemes, knowledge jumbles together just like them.

"You're right, but even so, you probably can't cut off information entirely, Senjougahara-san. Of course, all we can do is keep a mental kickboard to keep ourselves from drowning in knowledge."

"A kickboard… Grasping at straws when you're drowning is certainly unreliable,[20] but I don't know… For someone like me, it seems like carrying a kickboard full of teeth marks."

Senjougahara said something I don't understand very well—I wonder if it means something like "being impatient" and "grinding your teeth"? Or, it could be that Senjougahara wants to say that the "breaks" should be put on the influx—the torrent of knowledge. She has the strength to shut the world out. It's a dangerous strength, but it is a strength. There's no room for doubt about that.

"Speaking of boards, Hanekawa-san, the monolith that appears in *3001: The Final Odyssey* gave intelligence to humanity, didn't it? It gave us intelligence and made us evolve."

---

[18] Hitagi is playing off of the Japanese expression 一を聞いて十を知る (*ichi wo kiite juu wo shiru*, "ask one (thing) and know ten").

[19] Tsubasa is referring to the Japanese expression 策士、策に溺れる (*sakushi, saku ni oboreru*, "a schemer falls for his own schemes").

[20] Hitagi is playing off of the expression 溺れる者はわらをもつかむ (*oboreru mono ha wara wo mo katsumu*, "a drowning man will even grasp at straws").

"Yep. But the monolith itself isn't either good or bad. It seems neither intelligence nor information have any meaning for it, either."

"In the long run, it's a problem, isn't it, Hanekawa-san. Once we know something, it means that that we can't *not* know it. Living things can't run against evolution. We can't expel the intelligence that we've been infused with from our bodies. We'd burst if we tried."

The wish "I want to live without knowing" won't be realized.

For better or for worse.

We're forced to grow to that extent.

"Well… There's nothing convenient like eliminating the knowledge and information you thought you didn't need from your memory once and for all. But, I think you're right. Rather than running against or flowing against something, it's proactive degeneration, and rather than being a recession, it's a decline."

"…"

"What's wrong, Senjougahara-san? You suddenly clammed up."

"No, nothing's wrong. There's nothing wrong. Nothing at all. But without a doubt, that body of yours might be too stuffed with knowledge", Senjougahara said.

Without even trying to hide her genuine amazement.

"Most people wouldn't even know that *2001: A Space Odyssey* has three sequels. Hanekawa-san, you really do know everything, don't you."

Taking Senjougahara's cue, I answered like I always do.

"I don't know everything, I just know what I know."

MAYOI CASTLE

Yomiuri Shimbun
17 August 2013

Onimonogatari BD/DVD vol. 1
23 April 2014

Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Innocence, innocence, fly away![21]
Run against the winds on the path of fate.
A tale that tilts but never falls.

Translation: Haremless

Lucy Maud Montgomery is well known as the author of *Anne of Green Gables*, but this morning let's talk about something "blue" instead of something "red" like Anne's hair.[22] In other words, we'll be talking about the story starring Valancy Stirling, *The Blue Castle*.

"Have you read it before? Araragi-san."

"*The Blue Castle*? Actually, Hachikuji, I'm sorry for being a bad student, but I've never even heard of this book until just now."

Araragi-san replied after thinking for a few moments. *Anne of Green Gables* is just so famous that not many people would recognize *The Blue Castle* here in Japan in any case.

---

[21] Play on the popular saying "Pain, pain, fly away" that parents say to little kids, with "pain" (いたいの, *itai no*) replaced with "innocence" (いたいけ, *itaike*).

[22] *Anne of Green Gables* in Japanese is 赤毛のアン (*akage no an*, "Red-Haired Anne").

"I'm a bit embarrassed to admit it, but out of Montgomery's works I've only read *Anne of Green Gables*. I think Senjougahara's only read *Chronicles of Avonlea* even with her habit of reading anything and everything."

"What kind of reader is she?"

I guess there are all sorts of weird indiscriminate readers out there.

I began to explain the plot of *The Blue Castle* to Araragi-san.

"So the protagonist is a twenty-nine-year-old woman named Valancy Stirling with a power of imagination you could say rivals even Anne Shirley."

"Wouldn't it be pretty bad to have an imagination like Anne Shirley at twenty-nine…?"

"One day, Miss Stirling is told by her doctor that she only has one year left to live, and the story follows how a woman who has been oppressed by her family and relatives for her entire life chooses to live out the remainder of her life."

I ignored Araragi-san's comment. (It would be quite bad though, in reality.) Anyway, this isn't a book review so I'll stop there for the introduction. (I also won't explain why the title of the book is *The Blue Castle*.) I decided to ask Araragi-san a question.

"What would you do if you were told that you only had one year left to live, Araragi-san?"

"What? What do you mean?"

"I suppose you're always one wrong move from dying tomorrow, but what I'm asking is what you would do if you could survive for an entire year."

"That has a completely different gist to it. Hmm…"

I wonder—Araragi-san said with his arms crossed. One of the nice things about him is that he'll always at least consider any question I ask him. Being so very impressed by his laudable actions (that was a lie, just in case), I gave him a few suggestions.

"Like travelling around the world, or going on a shopping spree, or confessing to someone whom you've always loved, there are lots of things you could say."

"I do definitely get that feeling of not wanting to leave with any regrets, but hmm… Actually, I might not do anything."

"You wouldn't do anything?"

I wasn't expecting that answer. I wonder if he was just trying to say something different to get attention. I hate that sort of mentality of always wanting to show off one's appeal with a burning passion, so I immediately cut in.

"Doesn't that just mean you've given up on everything? Does that mean if all you've got left is one year, and no matter what you do it's all pointless, that in a way you've fallen into complete despair? You really are too self-conscious."

"That's not what I mean. Like, when you're alive it's just all things that you need to do. I mean as long as you're alive there's always going to be some activities you can't avoid."

"Activities. Do you mean doing work?"

"Not just work, even 'playing' or 'resting' are just activities you have to do to live. In order to live tomorrow you have to eat a nice meal and sleep well, but if I only had one year left to live I'd be free from all those sorts of responsibilities."

"Hmm…"

In the end there's not much of a difference from just falling into despair and giving up, in my opinion. That's what I would say, but he does have a point. And even a journey of a thousand miles has to start from a point.[23] And like he said, being able to do nothing at all might be the greatest luxury to an organism. Chasing your dreams. Looking for hope. Shooting for your targets. Those might seem like nice and positive examples of self-actualization but they all require quite an amount of hard work and effort in exchange.

---

[23] Mayoi quotes a slightly different version of the saying "A journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step" where "a single step" is replaced by "a single mile". She makes a pun with 一理 (*ichiri*, "one point") and 一里 (*ichiri*, "one mile").

But in fact, because of the little time remaining in your life, you wouldn't have to travel the world, you wouldn't have to go on a shopping spree, you wouldn't have to confess to that person you've always loved. That line of thought could warrant some consideration.

"As long as we're alive, we must try to bring ourselves the greatest amount of pleasure possible, so wouldn't it be nice to be free from that burden on our lives, at least at the end? Wouldn't it be nice to not have to do all the things that we want? You get tired after a while. You get tired of having to enjoy every moment of your life in this world all the time."

He sure talks like he knows everything there is to know. But it is like him to say that with all the deaths he's experienced.

I felt a little warm on the inside.

"By the way, Hachikuji. I know you said that this morning we'd be talking about something 'blue' instead of something 'red', but if we're talking about *Anne of Green Gables*, wouldn't that be 'green'?"

Says the person who apologized for being a bad student.

I feel like that warm feeling inside me was all for nothing.

"You know, in Japanese sometimes we use the word 'blue' instead of 'green',[24] but in the end it's talking about the same thing. I think you should apologize and correct yourself."

I wanted to punch him.

[24] Japanese, like many other languages, traditionally did not distinguish between the colors we know as "green" and "blue" and used a single term (青, *ao*) to refer to both. There is a word (緑, *midori*) that means specifically "green" but is not generally used in situations where this distinction is not needed. "Go" traffic signals and vegetables are 青 but green paint is 緑.

"Come on… It's not a big deal really, you could say that the future for a company looks 'black' if they're 'in the red'.[25] You're always like this, getting all worked up over the little details, 1/f yuragi-san."[26]

"Don't talk about someone like a healing wave or something.[27] Apologize for that and correct it too. My name is Araragi."

I see.

I guess I'll have you live for a bit longer, or quite a while longer, and enjoy life without complaining. So I, Hachikuji Mayoi, prayed that you, Araragi-san, would have a long life, then returned to our usual exchange.

"Sorry, I stuttered."

---

[25] The original compares two words for a baby: 赤ちゃん (*akachan*) with the word for "red" (赤, *aka*) in it, and 嬰児 (*midorigo*) with the word for "green" (嬰, *midori*).

[26] The *gi* in *yuragi* is written the same as in *Araragi* (阿良々木) as 木 as opposed to the normal ぎ. See also the next note.

[27] 1/f ゆらぎ (*1/f yuragi*) or "1/f noise", also known as "pink noise", is often (unscientifically) thought to have calming effects in Japan and is marketed as such in a variety of household electronics.

CHALLENGE TO THE READERS

Bessatsu Shonen Magazine
9 September 2013

Art: SHAFT
Translation: Maxdefolsch

Hai hai, hello to all readers of this Shonen Magazine supplement. Oshino Ougi here. "Arslan Senki" is interesting, isn't it! I enjoyed reading both the first and the second episode very much. I really like feeling excited when I read manga. It was so much fun, I thought about reading the original work on occasion. The feeling that reading is chained like this is really fun. I could keep reading books forever. It's a perpetual reading mechanism. Anyway, what kind of developments is awaiting in the third episode published this month? I want to get out of the classroom soon and return to reading.

So, this is the "challenge to the readers". Please stop reading the novel here, and deduce the truth of the case that Araragi-senpai encountered in first year. As I declared in the work, everything needed to identify the true culprit has been given. To say it in the style of old game books: "Please, solve the mystery to free us of this locked room!". Well, even if I say it this way, most people don't know about old game books. Actually, I don't know either. I don't know anything.

By the way, the one who invented this "challenge to the readers" was a great mystery writer called Ellery Queen. If you put this sentence before the solution, the reader is forced to narrow down the answer to one, and after reading, he goes, "Ah, I knew the criminal from the beginning". Mystery writers seem to be able to masterfully avoid those who boast about finding a certain part of the novel suspicious. Well, when I read a mystery novel I basically find everyone suspicious, so when someone isn't, it's definitely the criminal. In the end it's just guessing, isn't it. When I heard that story, I thought that the experts who left their name in history were too smart.

Experts aside, as far as realistic things are concerned, it's impossible to eliminate the possibility of a coincidence, or an outsider. Also, since this case happened in a world with aberrations, I can't rule out that it's "the act of a ghost" that transcends the laws of physics, but well, saying it in mathematical terms, that's probability theory. Let's go with what is possible, or has the highest probability—when you can't remove all the options that are logically impossible, the truth is the one that's logically most likely. Please identify who created the incomprehensible situation faced by Class 1-3, whether it's someone who attended the study group organized by Oikura-senpai, or someone who didn't attend the study group with a different approach.

For the sake of clarity, I inserted a list of characters on the next page, with a simplified profile attached. This is common in foreign mystery novels—it's not in order of appearance but in alphabetical order, but well, please consider that the culprit is someone in this list. You could say it's a multiple-choice question. Although I don't know if a question with so many options can be considered a multiple-choice question, if you can guess, you can feel something unnatural even from this table alone.

I must claim here that I, Oshino Ougi, am not the culprit (of course, it's alright not to suspect Kanbaru-senpai as well). Please keep in mind the possibility of the narrator Araragi-senpai or the poor Oikura-senpai being the perpetrator. If Araragi-senpai was the culprit, I would throw my own character away and burst into laughter. That's hilarious—wait, is this Episode-san's character?

One hint.

As I pointed out, Araragi-senpai hides some information when retelling the story of his past. However, he is not lying. In front of me, even if you have secrets, you can't lie—basically. This time, it's within the basics.

By the way, this story is one of the arcs included in "Owarimonogatari", scheduled to be released in October, but this "challenge to the readers" will not be included in that case. This is Ougi-chan service limited to this Shonen Magazine supplement. The character table will also be cut, so everyone, you were lucky!

The time limit is, let's see, only five minutes—is what I'd like to say, but I feel sorry for taking five minutes of everyone's precious time, so let's say two minutes. It's two minutes from 5:58 where the clock's hands stopped, until the school bell rings. If you can't answer within two minutes, please pick someone from the suspect list on the next page, depending on your intuition (needless to say, you don't have to think about any accomplice). Of course, you can follow your intuition and get the right answer. Even mathematics, like other subjects, is an academic field that can't be established without intuition. But please don't just decide by majority vote. For the sake of this foolish Araragi-senpai.

Well then, I wish you scrutiny and good luck.

Oshino Ougi

P.S.

Hint 2.

Common multiple.

Name	Study group	Club	Notes
Keiri Ashine	Yes		“Handsome”.
Koyomi Araragi	No		Chairman. The only full mark.
Biwa Arikure	No		Ill-tempered.
Michisada Igami	Yes		68 points.
Kyuusu Ukitobi	No		Lowest score among the girls.
Sodachi Oikura	Yes		Class president. Study group organizer.
Enji Kikigoe	Yes		Mischievous.
Hoka Kijikiri	Yes		Absent-minded.
Aizu Kube	Yes		Library assistant (nickname).
Nageki Gekizaka	Yes		Secretary in charge.
Sousho Koudou	Yes	Volleyball	Enthusiastic about club activities.
Okitada Kouma	No		Goes to cram school. 97 points without the study group.
Ayazute Shinaniwa	No	Track	Elitist.
Tsuuma Shuui	Yes		Vice president.
Juudo Shuzawa	Yes		Eager to teach.
Kokushi Suuchi	Yes		Reserved.
Ruise Sunahama	No		Day duty the next day.
Hitagi Senjougahara	No		Sickly. 98 points without the study group.
Kiichigo Daino	Yes		Eloquent.

Name	Study group	Club	Notes
Komichi Tetsujou	No	Softball	Mediator.
Jiku Toune	No		“Icing”.
Suisen Toishima	No		Laughs easily.
Chouka Nagagutsu	Yes		Joker.
Roka Haga	Yes	Track	Gamer.
Seiko Hayamachi	No		92 points without the study group.
Sekirou Higuma	Yes		Former student council president.
Jouro Hishigata	Yes	Softball	Quick to fight.
Shimono Fukadou	No		Acts cute.
Tenko Fukuishi	No		Introverted.
Shijima Fudou	Yes	Swimming	Liar?
Sakaatsu Fuyunami	No	Volleyball	Short.
Kabe Madomura	Yes	Light music	Bedhead.
Hyoui Marizumi	No		Distrustful.
Meibi Mizaki	No	Art	Artistic temperament.
Miawa Mebe	No		Kansai dialect. 95 points without the study group.
Shokunori Yuba	No	Baseball	Intimidating. Submitted a blank sheet.
Shoukei Yoki	Yes		Old-fashioned.
Shitsue Waritori	No		Practical kendo.

The name of the culprit is...

HITAGI COIN

Bakemonogatari [Introduction]
12 September 2013
Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Translation: Trauben Saft

Senjougahara Hitagi had been deceiving. As for what she'd been deceiving, the answer would be everything—everything and everyone around her, for two years. She had been hiding the curse that had befallen her, the condition she had been suffering from, all that time. I can't help but think about what that must have been like. Of course, I'm not an especially honest person either. I'm an adolescent high schooler who lives his life lying just like anybody else, somehow managing to get along. But I end up wondering precisely because I'm that kind of person, what it must be like to deceive, to continue to trick everything and everyone, to keep on lying no matter what.

"If anything, won't you have to do that from now on, Araragi-kun? After all, you'll have to hide the fact that you're a vampire—not just for two years, but the rest of your life", Senjougahara answered.

Class had already ended and there was no one but us in the classroom.

The classroom was deserted—I'd forgotten how I'd come to ask that question. Anyhow, Senjougahara had, quite unusually, neither dodged the question nor resorted to her usual verbal abuse.

"Well, you're right… That's why I wanted to ask you about this."

"You wanted to ask. Me. About how to lie?"

"Ummm…"

That was essentially what it was when you broke it down, but putting it that way would mean calling Senjougahara Hitagi a liar, and that was just too blunt.

"I don't think humans are very honest creatures," I answered, doing my best to mince my words. "But it's clear that you build up stress by lying in any kind of relationship, right? I don't know how to say it, you feel guilty, you have a nagging conscience… What I want to ask is, how do you put up with those sorts of feelings? Don't people fundamentally *not* want to lie? Isn't that why they phrase things so they just *barely* don't count as lies, or lie as little as possible?"

"If there's anything I can teach you as a master of lies—it's that tricking people and deceiving people are similar, but not identical things. You shouldn't lump those two words together, or say them in the same breath", Senjougahara said.

Even though I had just changed the topic to something anyone could agree with, Senjougahara threw my consideration completely out the window. It seemed like she was in a good mood today. Well, seeing as this was what she was like when she was in a *good* mood, she was pretty hard to deal with as a classmate, but…

"Araragi-kun, do you have some small change?"

"Small change?"

Senjougahara sighed.

"You might even consider a 1000-yen bill small change coming from your family background, but I'm talking about coins."

"My family isn't *that* rich…"

Well, I knew I had *some* coins in my coin purse at least… I took out my wallet and gave Senjougahara a 100-yen coin.

"Thanks."

"…"

"…"

"…"

"…"

"Hey. I'm not letting you *have* it! Give it back, okay? Didn't you want to use it for something?"

"Let's make a bet, Araragi-kun." said Senjougahara nonchalantly, her fingers playing with my 100-yen coin.

"Heads or tails—front or back. A coin toss. If heads comes up, I get the 100 yen. If tails comes up, I'll become your slave for the rest of my life."

"Why are the stakes so high!?"

I don't want to do that!

I don't want to gamble with someone who'd bet their freedom over their body on a coin toss, let alone only for 100 yen!

"Are you Two-Face or something? Don't stake your life on the side of a coin."

"Two-Face. Quite an admirable villain."

She spoke like she was a villain herself. What kind of heroine is she?

"Don't worry about it. I just want to trick you, as an example… You better use this as reference for your pitiful life."

"My pitiful life…"

Why do I have to be spoken to like this? Or was this her strategy, to goad me into taking the bet? Well, no, Senjougahara is always like this, so it's not like she's provoking me here in particular… Maybe because she's in a good mood today, she *really* does think my life is pitiful.

"Trick me, huh?"

That means she's clearly trying to cheat in this gamble of a coin toss, right? But how does she expect to trick me in such a simple bet when the coin isn't even weighted? Since she's pretty good with handling stationery, I'd expect Senjougahara to be rather dexterous… But I doubt she could manipulate the sides of the coin like a magician.

Hm. I'm a little intrigued.

"Okay, I'm in."

"Ha. What a pervert. You exposed your rotten nature."

"No, wait, what I'm interested in is just how you're going to deceive me, okay? I'm not interested in you wanting to become a slave or anything!"

"The maggots in your brain seem interested."[28]

Senjougahara quickly prepared the coin toss. I checked one more time—drawing up some defenses against her, with her having almost announced that she's going to pull some trick, probably is something like good manners in this kind of situation.

"You're not going to switch out the coin I gave you with another one, are you?"

"Hmph. I don't have any 100-yen coins I could exchange it with. Don't underestimate my poverty."

Those were heavy words.

"Let's decide this so that we don't argue about it later. The side with the numbers is the front. Is that alright?"

"Yeah, that's okay."

Strictly speaking, there is supposed to be a properly defined front and back for coins, but I didn't know which was which. I don't really remember which was the front and which was the back of a postcard, either… If I *had* to recall it, with both coins and postcards, it was the exact opposite of what you'd normally think. Well, the probability is fifty-fifty, so it doesn't really matter.

"Well then, let's start", said Senjougahara before flipping the coin with her thumb—the coin which her life (meaninglessly) depended on, all too easily. I really don't know what kind of nerves she has—at least judging from the way she flipped the coin, there was no apparent scheme or intention behind it.

---

[28] Both when Koyomi speaks about his interest in the gamble and Hitagi talks about the "maggots in his brain", the verb 湧く (*waku*) is used, which has the meanings "to rise up, to well up, to appear" among others. So, while Koyomi talks about his arising interest in the subject, Hitagi talks about metaphorical maggots emerging from his "rotten mind".

Senjougahara Hitagi didn't stop the 100 yen with her hands. She let the coin fly straight up then drop on the desk. If there was any way to cheat in a truly innocent coin toss, it would be to manipulate the position of the coin inside your hand after catching it. But at least Senjougahara didn't do that.

The 100-yen coin lost its momentum and dropped flat on the table after spinning on it for a short time.

In other words, it didn't come to the unlikely kind of conclusion that'd be expected in this kind of situation—the coin not falling over, standing on its rim. But in the end, an unexpected side *did* show itself.

The side with the picture of cherry blossoms was up.

In short, it was the back side.

"… Wait, what?"

I shook my head, even though I was the winner.

What was up with this sloppy, meaningless unfolding of events?

"What were you trying to do, Senjougahara? Didn't you just lose?"

"What are you talking about? I won, didn't I?"

Senjougahara said that, confidently, unconcerned, without changing her expression.

She didn't at all appear to be intimidated—that wasn't the face of someone who had come to be my slave for the rest of her life. Rather, she acted like a queen.

"Look. Isn't the front side up? We decided before that if heads comes up I win, right?"

"What?"

I looked at it again. Was I mistaken? I thought that, being a well-meaning person, but it was still the same side as before, the side with the cherry blossoms.

"What? What? Do you want to turn this into an argument about whether you did or didn't say it? 'I said that the side with the cherry blossoms was the front', something like that? You don't really mean to say that was your trick, right? I don't accept that. You *did* say that the side with the numbers was the front."

"That's right. I said the side with numbers on it is the front—and that's why I won, Araragi-kun."

Then, Senjougahara… brought her index finger close to the 100 yen on the table, as if beginning some kind of séance.[29] But she didn't touch it. Her finger stopped just above it. While holding her finger there, she asked:

"Don't you see them? The numbers, I mean."

"…"

Looking again, there really were numbers written there—beneath the cherry blossom motif. "100 Yen", written in small letters.

Of course, it was not handwritten. Just like "Japan" was written above the blossoms—it was impressed there.

"**On coins, there are numbers on both sides**. So if you bet on the side with the numbers in a coin toss, you'll always win." Senjougahara said, then quickly picked up the 100 yen.

I was dumbfounded. Well, that *was* a blind spot. To be honest, I hadn't really been aware of the fact that there were numbers there. But thinking about it now—the face value was impressed not only on the 100-yen coin, but also on the 1-, 10-, and 500-yen—in large font on one side, and small font on the other side. Even the 5-yen coin, which only has the face value impressed on one side, has the year it was minted impressed on the other side.

But…

Can she really say she deceived me with this?

"Isn't it obvious? It didn't come to an argument of whether you said one thing or the other, but it's clear as day that you tricked me!"

"I'm fine with that. That's what it means to trick, not to deceive."

---

[29] In Japanese, the term こっくりさん (*kokkuri-san*) is used here. It's something close to table-turning where you put a coin on a sheet of paper with numbers and answers like "yes" and "no" written on it. Then everyone puts their index finger on the coin and recites the phrase "Kokkuri-san, Kokkuri-san, please come here". After that, the coin is supposed to "move on its own" by some spiritual influence and show the answer to some question.

After talking about how it was convenient that the cherry blossoms had come up on the first try—she really didn't know if she should consider herself lucky or not—Senjougahara said:

"In the end, my trick when it comes to lying skillfully, Araragi-kun… **is to not care if the lie gets exposed.**"

Everyone wants to become a good person.

Everyone wants to be a good person.

Because of that, they patch things up so that the lie doesn't come to light. But if you give up on that…

Humans can lie as much as they want.

"The goal of lying is to make yourself feel good, not to deceive others.

That's why in order to make yourself feel good, no matter what the other person feels, no matter how they may think about you, you just don't care. If you don't decide clearly whether you want to be a good person or you want to feel good, then you end up somewhere in between. What do you think? Was that helpful?" asked Senjougahara, flipping the coin one more time.

Not up in the air, but at me.

I caught it.

"Well, it helped me, but…"

I looked at the 100-yen coin in my hand, while thinking, "Well, there's no way I could live like that"—that is, while saying that it didn't help me at all, I asked her. Wondering about how she had learned how to lie this way by eighteen and whether she'd been taught by anybody.

"Are you fine with giving me this back?"

"Yes. In front of you, Araragi-kun, I think I feel better when I'm a good person. With you, Araragi-kun", she said toneless, without any emotion whatsoever, like always,

"I want to build a relationship without a front nor back side."

No.

She *may* have put emotion into that.

Black Hanekawa's

CAT SIGN ASTROLOGY

Heroine Book 1: Hanekawa Tsubasa
19 September 2013

Art: Hajime Ueda
Translation: Haremless

Today, we'll be having Black Hanekawa tell us the horoscopes for not the twelve zodiac signs, but the twelve cat zodiac signs.

First off, pick your favorite story from *Bakemonogatari I* to *Koimonogatari*. That'll be your cat zodiac sign, once you've got it, sit back, relax and let off all that stress that you've been building up!!

If you picked
Nekomonogatari Kuro

Cat

You got some pretty good luck. Cats tend to stay close to humans, but keep a certain distance so they're not very consistent. However, if dogs are man's best friend, cats simply exist alongside humanity. Staying close but not too close is a purrfectly fine way to live.

If you picked
Bakemonogatari II

Lion

Apparently, some people like to point out that Aries and Taurus are particularly masculine signs. But what's the point of that? For lions, the males have majestic manes while lionesses have sleek bodies. You're cool the way you are so you should just just stay that way. Did something good happen to mew recently?

If you picked
Nisemonogatari II

Lynx

There are endangered species of wildcats out there. They're in big trouble, so you better help them out. Don't think you can selfishly live your own life! I will say that "lynx" has a nice ring to it, and I'm super jealous. Nyaturally, I expect you to be cool enough to live up to such a name.

If you picked
Hanamonogatari

Cheetah

Everyone thinks cheetahs are the fastest ever, but that may not be the case. They can go all out for a split second, but they tire quickly. Well, no one does it better than the king of instant speed at least. So make sure mew make the most out of that speed. Be quick and decisive. People mostly deal with the short term so take advantage of that.

If you picked
Otorimonogatari

Liger

Half lion and half tiger. They are a human creation, so I find that a bit troubling if you ask me. Then again, dogs and cats are products of selective breeding. Well, I'll make sure you have good luck with money, so think of it like I'm praying for you. Just don't go thinking that'll be enough meow.

If you picked
Nisemonogatari I

Rose-gold pussy willow

So you're a plant. Quite a few plants take their names from cats but purrsonally I think the way willows softly sway in the wind makes them most like them. Now, I want you to face the rough waves of society with the same flexibility. Or let them flow past you, even. As long as your will doesn't break, you can get through anything, no matter what.

If you picked
Nekomonogatari Shiro

Tiger

Watch out for fire! Be careful around it! It's hot! You'll get burned! And beware of a certain katana, too! You'll have no idea when it'll come slicing down from the sky! By the way, white tigers are tigers, but black tigers are a kind of shrimp. The more mew know.

If you picked
Bakemonogatari I

Black-tailed gull

I know gulls are birds, but they "meow" like cats, so it's close enough. How amewsing is it that while wildcats are cats, "sea cats" are actually birds? Why not call them "sky cats" then? Anyway, make sure people don't get your name wrong. There's never a time to let others mess up your name. On the other paw, don't be getting other people's names wrong yourself.

If you picked
Koimonogatari

Cougar

When it comes down to cougars, they have a "womanly" vibe, don't you think? Having picked such a sexy cat, you must be in love. Nyot that I'm in any pawsition to even talk about love. I guess I'll just keep an eye on you.

If you picked
Kabukimonogatari

Panda

Before you go thinking what pandas have to do with cats, bears are also part of Carnivora. So that means panda bears are part of the same order. And get this, they are one of the few species that are herbivores. All they snack on are bamboo. This makes me more worried about them going extinct over wildcats. But, like, don't they have the coolest camouflage? It's the purrfect ratio of black and white.

If you picked
Kizumonogatari

Fishing cat

This may seem obvious from their name, and this is really a minor point, but fishing cats hunt fur fish. The belief that all cats are fish lovers is a little misleading, really. The only cats that go out of their way to catch fish are these guys. Watch yourself around water now. In the end, despite their name, fishing really isn't that big of a deal.

If you picked
Onimonogatari

Leopard seal

Anyather one for the Carnivora order. Purretty broad, huh? They're called "leopard seals". Who do you think would win in a fight between the leopard of the sea and the leopard of the land? Nyaturally, the leopard seal would if it was in water and the leopard on the ground. But don't you think "sea leopard" sounds cool? Like a terrifying beast of the sea. Anyway, these horoscopes are just excuses and have no bearing on your fortune. Your fate is all up to you.

NADEKO MIRROR

Yomiuri Shimbun
21 September 2013
Onimonogatari BD/DVD vol. 2
28 May 2014
Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Constrict, bite, lie.
That is just what snakes do.
An unrequited love, tenacious like a snake.[30]
The tale will now bare its fangs.

Translation: Tarable Translations

Let's talk about Robert Louis Stevenson's *Jekyll & Hyde*. Why yes, I *did* read it just to make myself look good, sorry. Whenever a middle school student like me (I'm Sengoku Nadeko, by the way, hello) reads a book, especially foreign literature, they're almost always doing it just to show off (100% fact). To tell you the truth, this book is one of the ones I added to my shelf to make myself look smarter back when Koyomi-onii-chan came over to play. Some time after that, I picked it off the bookshelf while I was cleaning up my room. I'm not used to reading, so the very manageable page count was probably the biggest reason I chose this one. But, in any case, reading is an encounter. I thought it was a very interesting book. It's a very famous work, so I already knew some of the details, but it turned out to be a masterpiece that differed from my expectations in a good way.

[30] The word used here is written 失恋 (*shitsuren*, "unrequited love"), but has an indicated pronunciation that reads しつこい (*shitsukoi*, "persistent").

Alrighty then. It's human nature to want to brag a little after you read a classic. So after finishing it, the first thing I do is call up my friend, Tsukihi-chan.

"*Jekyll & Hyde*? Oh, are you talking about *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*? Yeah, I read that, too! That really takes me back… I read it back when I was in elementary school, so I'm a little hazy on the details, but the premise was pretty interesting. Hmm, so you just finished reading it, Nadeko-chan?"

… She's already read it.

When you read something beyond your level, but it turns out the person you're bragging to about it has already read it, the blow to your pride is nothing to shake a stick at. Tsukihi-chan's perfect pronunciation of the English title was nothing to shake a stick at, either.

It feels like the wind has been taken out of my sails, but the fighter in me won't let me quit here. If she's already read it, then that's that. There are still things we can discuss about it. So I ask her opinion.

"What did you think about it, Tsukihi-chan? Err, I mean… You know, about Dr. Henry Jekyll and Mr. Edward Hyde's relationship. I guess they were kinda symmetrical, like mirrored reflections of each other…"

I choose my words carefully. It would be embarrassing to say something off the mark, after all. Saying something stupid would give Tsukihi-chan a reason to get all excited. I'm a total beginner when it comes to reading, so there's a very good chance that I misread or misinterpreted something.

"Mr. Hyde, who's 'only' wicked, might seem like a totally different personality… The complete opposite of Dr. Jekyll, who's 'only' upright, but they didn't hate each other at all. If anything, they really needed each other…"

I sound like I'm reciting a crummy book report, more of a summary than an analysis, but Tsukihi-chan seems to understand what I'm getting at.

"That's true. While you couldn't really call them friends, they certainly made something of an odd couple. Just like how the north and south poles of a magnet attract each other, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde were drawn to one

another. It's comparatively easy to see why Mr. Hyde needed Dr. Jekyll, but looking at it from an outside perspective, it might be harder to understand why Dr. Jekyll needed Mr. Hyde," she says, agreeing with me.

Tsukihi-chan seems to be in a good mood today. I hit the jackpot (days where I go broke are more common).

"Dr. Jekyll's friends couldn't understand why he tried to defend Mr. Hyde, either. And when he left the lawyer, Gabriel John Utterson, a will that entrusted everything he had to Mr. Hyde, it went past strange and straight into suspicious. It was a complete mystery why he would want to do that."

Even though she said that she was hazy on the details, she's able to touch pretty deeply on the content of the story. That's Tsukihi-chan for you. It's enough to leave *me* the one feeling overwhelmed, since I've only just finished reading it. But I have to fight on. I have to keep trying until it's obvious how hard I'm trying.

"If you think about it that way, Dr. Jekyll might have relied on Mr. Hyde more than the other way around… I guess it's hard to follow the logic that pure good could seek out evil, though."

But even if it doesn't make sense logically, I can understand it on an emotional level. At the very least, in the context of the story, I think it's very convincing that Dr. Jekyll would be fascinated by his bad friend.

Good hates evil, and evil hates good… That's a very one-sided way of looking at it. There's room for the perspective that good can envy evil, and evil can envy good, too.

"Well, when it comes down to it, people tend to seek out the things they don't have within other people. See, for example, you may look up to me, but it's not like *I* don't have anything at all to learn from *you*, either."

Tsukihi-chan went and decided that I look up to her… Well, she isn't wrong. As someone who tends toward self-hatred, I really respect the way Tsukihi-chan loves herself so much.

"I'd never want to be like that myself, but your earnest, one-track mind can seem almost stunning to me."

"So you'd never want to be like me…"

The first part is so depressing that it's hard to hear the compliment.

"But," Tsukihi-chan speaks, suddenly changing the mood. "To answer your question of what I thought of their relationship, I'd have to say that I don't think it was a very healthy one. Being together with their polar opposite made them both go bad. It hardly seemed like a very constructive relationship. It was a destructive bond, in which neither of them could become happy…"

A destructive bond, in which neither of them could become happy. A destructive bond that the people around them couldn't understand.

Still, looking at the world around us, I don't think that sort of relationship is so uncommon. You could end the argument by saying that relationships between people can't be clearly explained, and that only the people in question can really understand them, but Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde had some reason that they didn't want to put an end to things between them. From her blunt criticism of the two, Tsukihi-chan probably had a similar impression after reading it… I think.

"What about you, Nadeko-chan? If a girl who was your complete opposite suddenly showed up, do you think you could grow to like her?"

"Huh…? What do you mean?"

"Exactly what I said. If you met your polar opposite—if you met Anti-Nadeko-chan, do you think you'd get along with her? Do you think you could see eye-to-eye?"

"Hmmm…"

I'm a little taken with the clever nickname of "Anti-Nadeko,"[31] but it's hard for me to picture a girl with a personality the exact opposite of mine. A cheerful, lively, sociable girl who reads lots of books, looks people straight in the eye, and works hard… Maybe? Thinking about it that way, she sounds totally flawless, and I'm sure I couldn't help but like her… Still, no

[31] 逆撫子 (*sakanadeko*, "Anti-Nadeko") is made from the combination of 逆 (*gyaku*, "reverse") and 撫子 (*nadeko*). 逆 is read as *saka* when next to 撫, and so the nickname is pronounced similarly to 逆撫で (*sakanade*, "to rub someone the wrong way").

matter how I might feel about her, I bet someone like that would hate me. She'd hate me, or maybe I'd just make her mad…

"We might not get along… and we might not see eye-to-eye, but I'd still like to meet her."

"Even if she hates you? Even if she gets mad at you?"

"Yeah."

I want to meet her, and I want to see what she's like. It feels like, through meeting her, I'd be able to encounter a brand new "Sengoku Nadeko." It's sort of like the reason you'd look in a mirror—but I'm sure she'd reflect my image even more vividly than a mirror, so I'd have to be careful not to turn to stone upon seeing her.

"If she gets mad at me," I say, while thinking to myself that Anti-Nadeko-chan would probably hate this about me, too, "then she'll get mad, and that'll be that."

SHINOBU SCIENCE

Yomiuri Shimbun
26 October 2013

Onimonogatari BD/DVD *vol. 1*
23 April 2014

Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

The demon cries at the stories of the past.[32]
Long ago there was a place where both humans and monsters lived.
The legend of a solitary demon.

Translation: Haremless

In the opening of Isaac Asimov's *I, Robot*, are his famous Three Laws of Robotics. The book itself is a collection of short stories, but all of them involve the relationship between humans and robots who are ensnared by the Laws. The story that I, Oshino Shinobu, was most excited about was the sixth story, *Little Lost Robot*. The sorrow of a robot enslaved to those inferior to it, and the determination to stand up to the humans by taking advantage of the small loopholes in the rules that govern its life was quite thrilling, even to me as a vampire having lived five hundred years.

"Hmm… Now that you mention it, I remember that you were a big science fiction fan, Shinobu-onee-chan. I guess a monster that just lives for a long time would be quite fascinated with future civilizations."

[32] It says 往年の話をすれば鬼が泣く (*ounen no hanashi o sureba oni ga naku*), which is a play on the expression 来年のことを言えば鬼が笑う (*rainen no koto o ieba oni ga warau,* "the devil laughs at talk of the future"), meaning you can't rely on the future.

The doll girl, shikigami of that violent exorcist, Ononoki Yotsugi, nodded without a hint of expression or emotion.

"Unfortunately, the only science fiction I've read is *Diaspora*."

"Don't lie."

Are you trying to brag?

Seeing as this girl is both a doll and a shikigami, she is essentially a robot, but possibly due to the violent exorcist's principles, she doesn't seem to have the Three Laws installed.

"The Three Laws? You mean cyan, magenta and yellow?"[33]

"Those are the three primary colors. Also, I don't remember ever allowing you to call me by that ridiculous name 'Shinobu-onee-chan'."

"But you still get mad at me when I call you Shinobu-obaa-chan."

"Are you asking me not to?"

"Well, the only science fiction I've read is *Diaspora*."

It seems she's still quite proud of that.

Her stubbornness is quite the sight, however.

"I find myself quite interested in the theme of humans being used as tools for the convenience of civilization. Don't you think humans, not in science fiction or robots, actual humans, fundamentally have a tendency toward self-destruction along with the advancement of civilization? Don't you think that instead of advancing, they're degenerating? Instead of getting more refined, they're simply being weeded out? I always think 'All of the products of scientific advancement we have are supposed to make our lives easier, but we can never really rein them in.'"

"Well, when you lump all humans together, it seems like the people who 'create' those tools of convenience for society and those who 'use' them are often different people."

In fact, with all of the diverse "products of scientific advancement" there are, you can't just lump them up all together. That said, I do understand

[33] Yotsugi mistakes The Three Laws (三原則, *sangensoku*) for The Three Primary colors (三原色, *sangenshoku*).

what the doll girl was trying to say to some extent. I did find the world "self-destruction" a bit too strong.

"You thought the word was a bit too strong? Sorry about that. I wasn't trying to take a dig at you, Shinobu-onee-chan, what with your familiar rebelling against you and leaving you a pitiful shadow of your former self."

"What an earsore."

I don't want to hear that from some shikigami no one can even control. But I wonder, if a tool used by our civilization, like a car, or a cell phone, or a game console, or a weapon, anything really, were conscious, would it **want to be used** by humans?"

Assuming that being controlled by a lesser being would be a disgrace to it, and assuming that accepting this control itself would be a fundamentally painful experience, would being controlled by a perfect being, one that would allow it to use its functions to its fullest capability, one that could open up its vast bank of knowledge, would it still be reluctant to be controlled by such a being?

"That's a meaningless pretense assumption. In the real world, if we were to give machines consciousness we'd be talking about fantasy, not science fiction, Shinobu-onee-chan."

"Stop being such an earsore again."

That's another thing I don't want a tsukumogami like you telling me.

Actually, should you really be saying that?

"In the first place," the doll girl continued expressionlessly and emotionlessly, paying no heed to my critical glare. Is that all there is to this girl?

"That 'perfect being' would be part of fantasy anyway. There's no way it could really exist. People's desire for it to exist has actually left human society worse off to a greater or lesser extent."

"Hmm…"

Says the person who's never even read the books.

"Why bother using a big and fancy-sounding phrase like 'to a greater or lesser extent', couldn't you just say 'more or less'?" was what I was about to ask, but I was interested enough to generously remain silent.

"That sounds rather interesting. Continue."

"There's not much for me to 'continue' on to. I was just saying what I thought of off the top of my head. But if you really want me to, I would say that that 'perfect being' would probably be the controlled rather than the controller, or the used rather than the user. Of course, if you look at it from the controller's point of view, there'd be no point in controlling a useless being."

"Ka ka, a useless master with a capable slave. I suppose the both of us know quite well that it's not always the strong that control the weak."

"Right. 'Survival of the fittest' is easy to understand, but the relationship between the strong and weak isn't always that simple. You could say that situations like 'David and Goliath' aren't uncommon in our society."

The trick to clawing your way to the top of society is to know how to throw those above you down below you. That's the way it is and that's how it's always been—the doll girl said with an all-knowing tone.

Are you some vassal planning to overthrow their lord?

And "clawing your way to the top" was quite a strong choice of words again.

The "Humanity Association" that appears in *I, Robot* was acting in anticipation of a robot rebellion, I remember, but I suppose I shouldn't bring that up with the doll girl never having read it before. She's not just being controlled by the violent exorcist, she also doesn't seem to be conscious of the fact that she's stuck below the humans… Actually, does she even have a consciousness in the first place?

Although, I find it quite interesting that even without a consciousness, she seems to be able to think of things. I get the feeling this has quite a few implications.

"Hmm, I feel like I'm starting to lose track of this conversation that I was on top of at the beginning."

"I suppose you know what it's like now to have been at the top in the beginning only to fall to the very bottom."

"Who said I'm at the very bottom now."

"Now that I think about it, being a controller doesn't seem like a stroll in the park anymore, it seems more troublesome than I thought to rule over those greater than oneself. I almost want to throw it all away and just fall to the bottom. That's what you did, isn't it?"

"…"

"Let's go back to our original topic, maybe losing grasp of the reins on something you created by yourself in the beginning is just part of nature. Humans developed their civilization in order to do the things that they couldn't do themselves. It was just too much for them all along."

"Even so, we can't just go back to living in caves. All we can do is fall into ruin along with civilization."

"I hope that civilization is all that's left."

She said without a hint of a smile on her face, some sort of joke that no one would find funny. She probably would have added "I said with a dashing look" a while ago. Although, she was right, in the real world without the Three Laws, not like the future Asimov envisioned in *I, Robot*, humanity and science may not be able to coexist forever.

I started imagining.

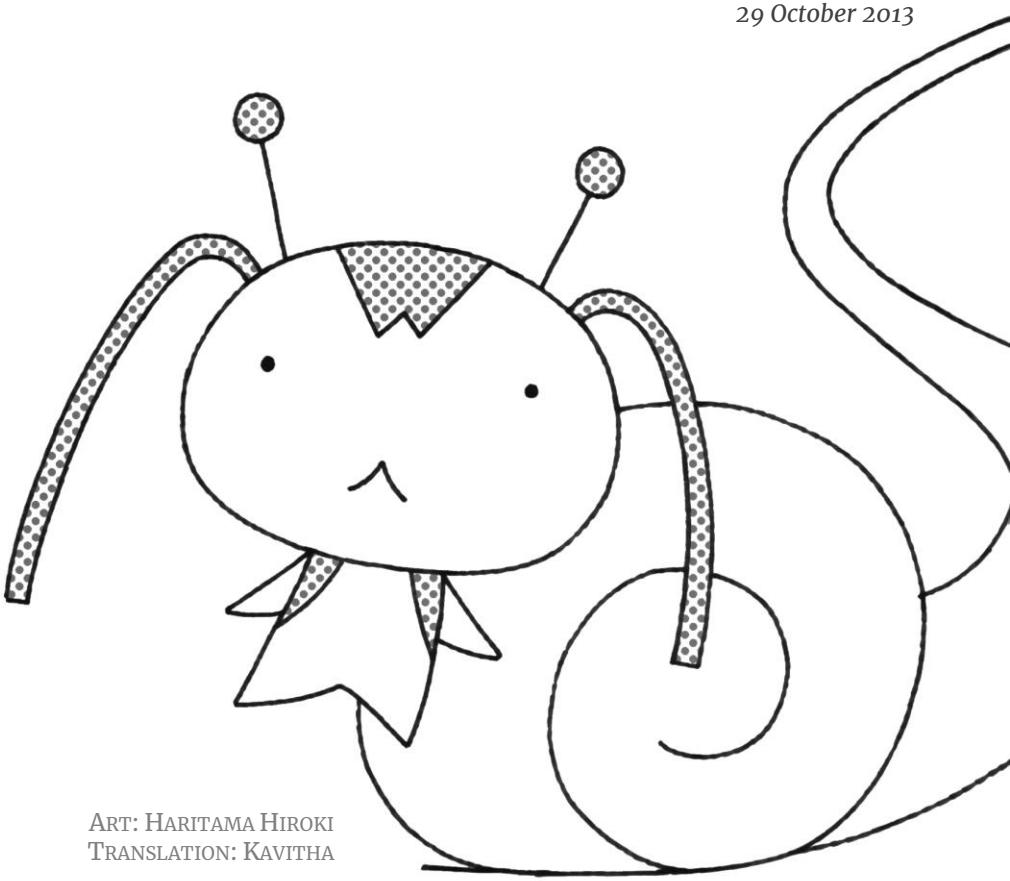
I imagined a world where humans had all disappeared, where everyone had long disappeared, a world fallen into an annihilation brought on by itself. A world that would fall into ruin even without me. And indeed, it seemed like a place that would be dominated by the complex and bizarre tools of civilization rather than wicked spirits and monsters. And so I would simply stare in horror at such a world and say

"… Panaino."[34]

[34] One of Shinobu's catchphrases, ぱないの (*panaino*), is a contraction of 半端じゃないの (*hanpa ja nai no*, literally "it's not half-bad"). According to Koyomi's suspicions, at some point she lost sight of the original meaning and started using it as a greeting.

THE LOST SNAIL

Heroine Book 2: Hachikuji Mayoi
29 October 2013



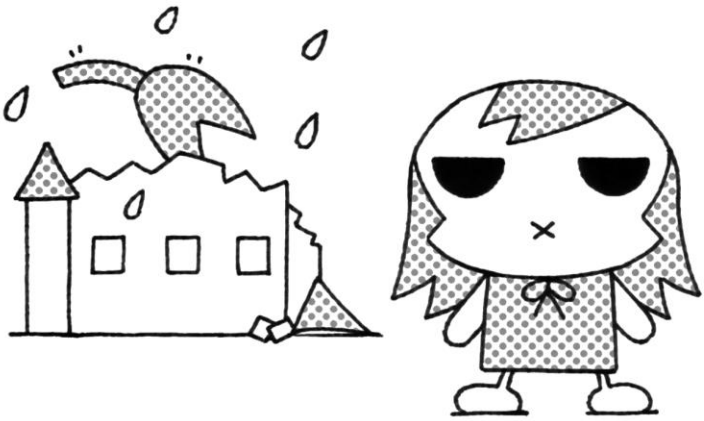
Art: Haritama Hiroki
Translation: Kavitha

Long, long ago, there lived a lost snail.

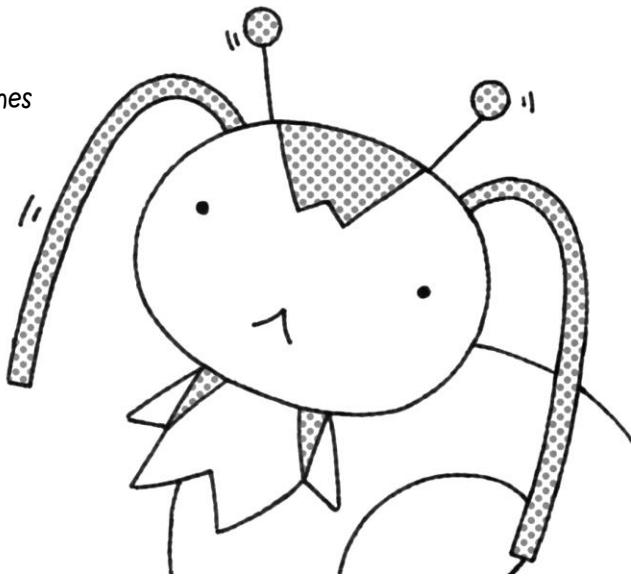
"I don't have a home to go back to.
I want a home to go back to."

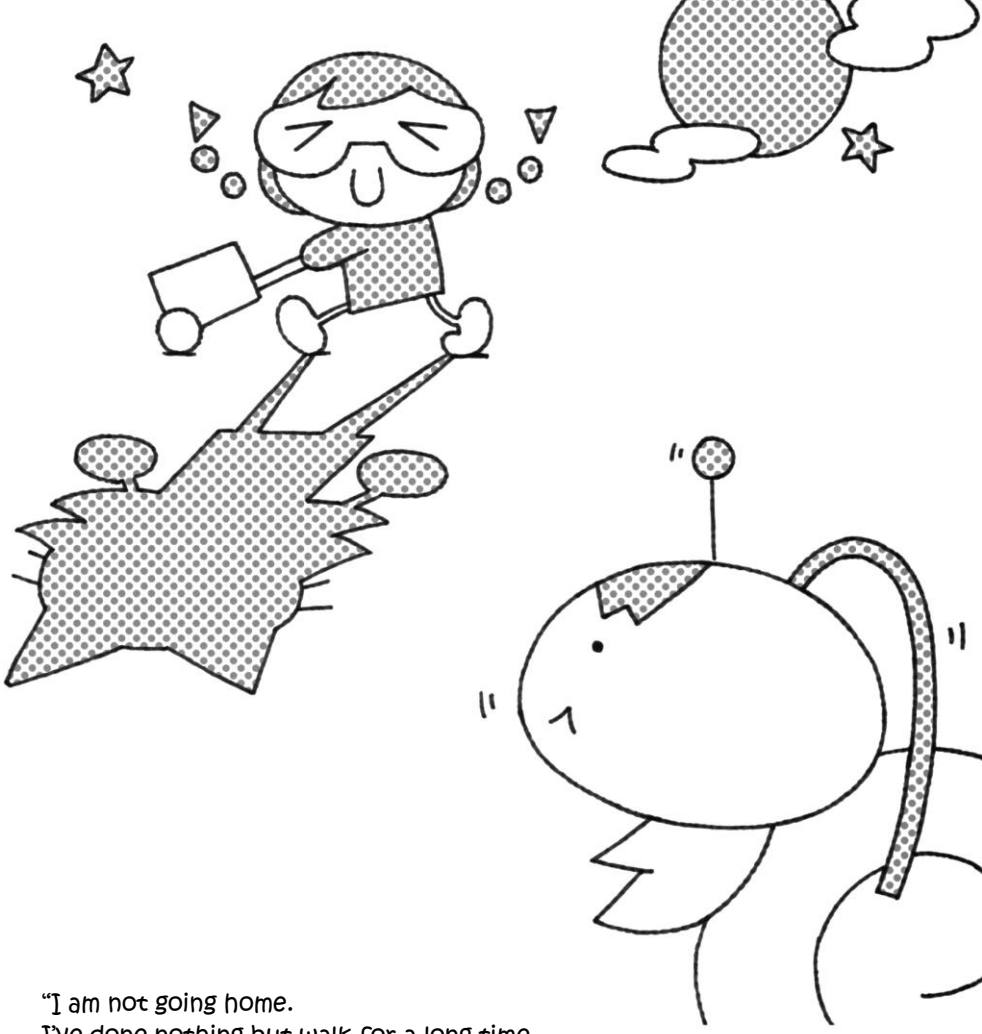
The snail started on a long trip to find its home.

"I once used to reside in a stately mansion.
But that home is no longer there.
It is not there anywhere in this world."



The snail knew that homes
do not last forever.



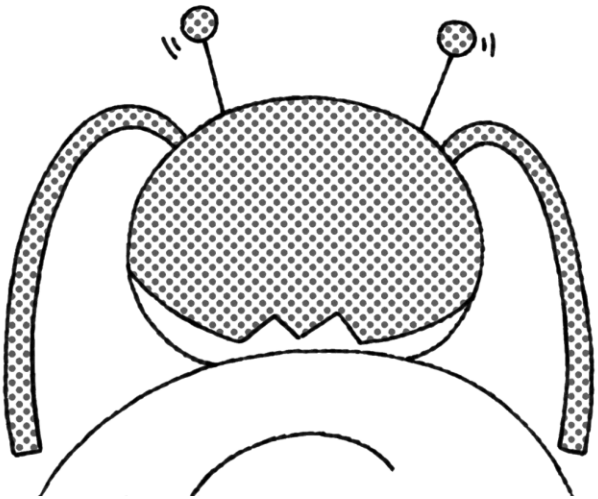


"I am not going home.
I've done nothing but walk for a long time.
But I do not want to go back to that house at all."

The snail knew that such homes also existed.

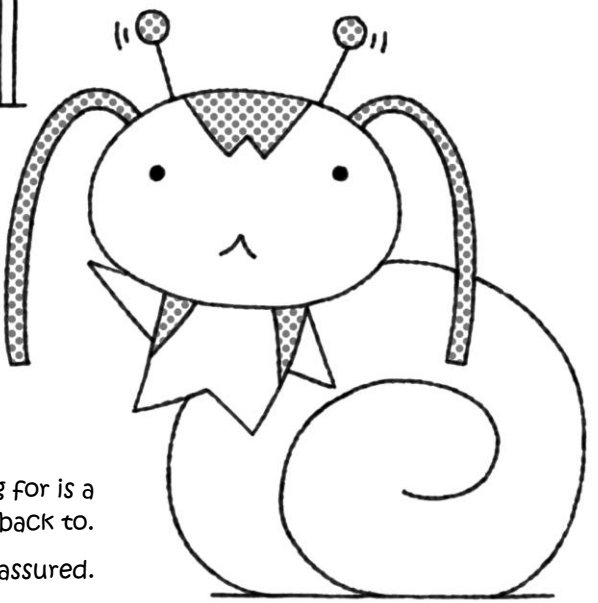
Strange houses and ruined mansions.
There were different kinds of homes.

But no matter how much it searched,
the snail couldn't find its home.



"As you are a snail, isn't what you are carrying on your back your home?"

"No, it is not like that."



"The home I am searching for is a place I can go back to.

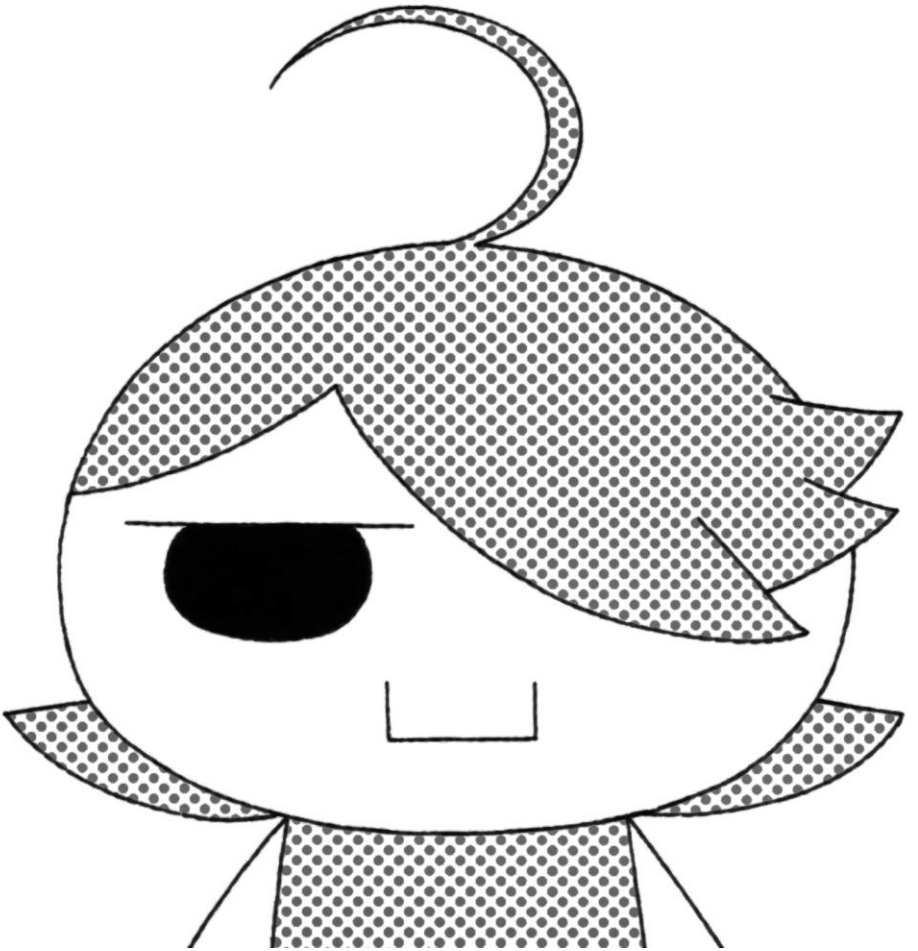
A place where I feel reassured.

A place where I feel safe.

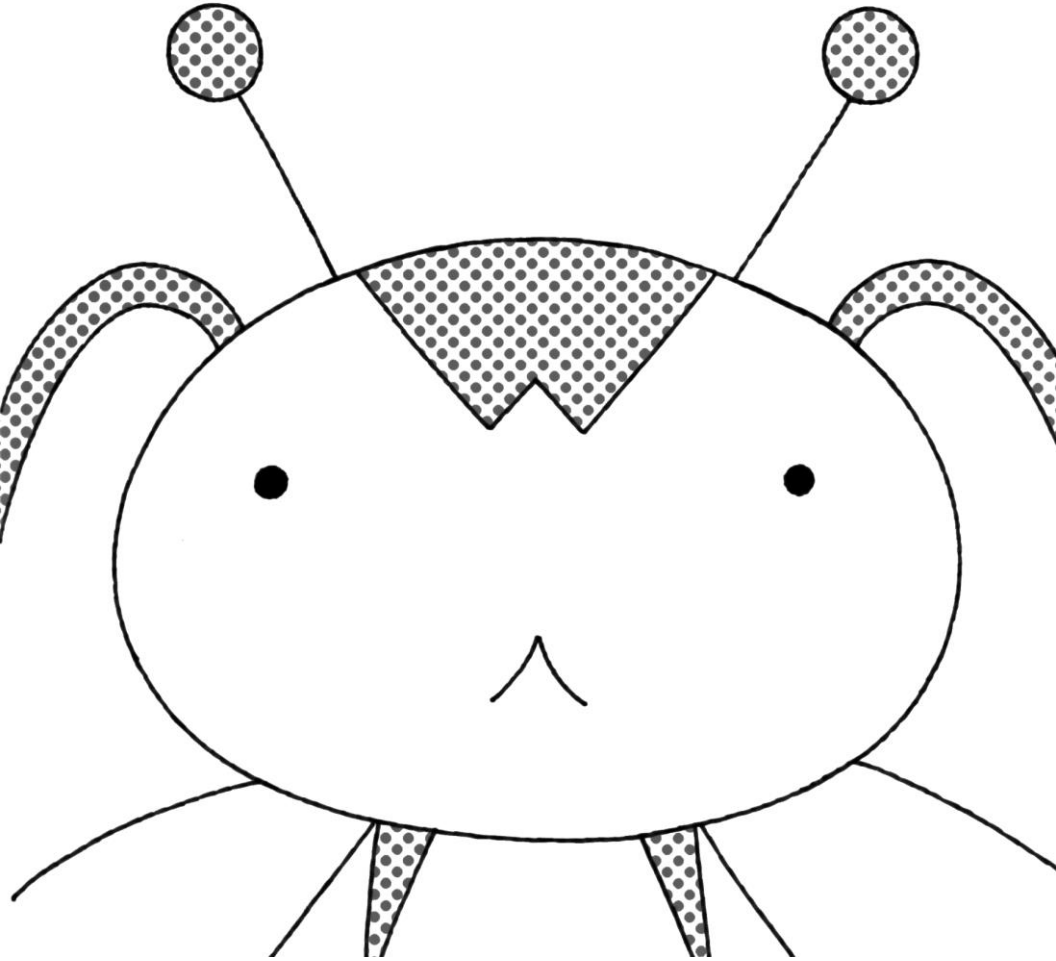
It is a happy place."

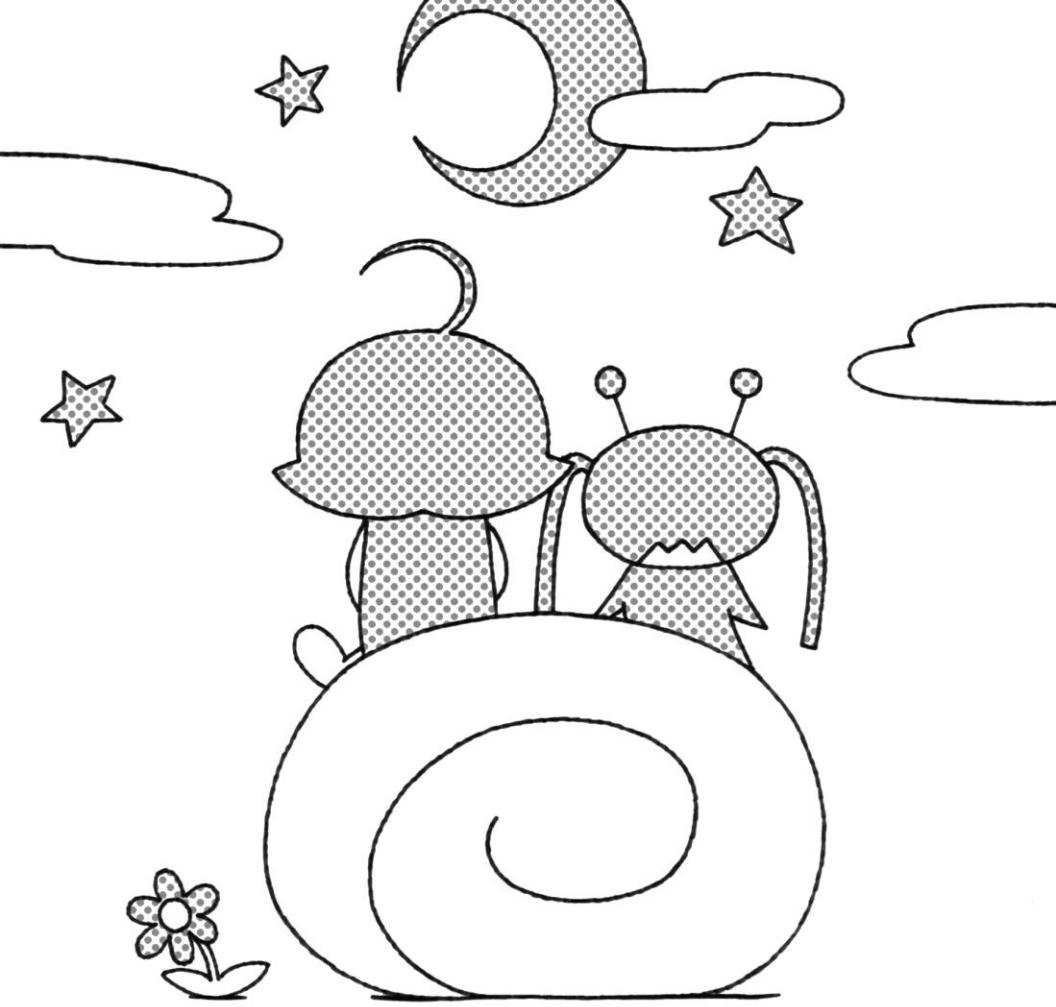
"If that is the case, it is easy"

"From today, I am your home"



"When you want to be reassured"
"When you want to feel safe"
"When you want to be happy, come to me"
"I will always be looking forward to you coming back"





Though it did not find the home that it was searching for, the snail found a family.

The End.

HITAGI FIGURE

Bakemonogatari Premium Item Box
21 November 2013
Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Translation: Tigoris Translates

For those arriving at this story after watching the anime, this scenario will likely make sense. For those arriving here purely out of an interest in the figure, this will be a completely unfathomable situation, but shortly after the violent onmyouji Kagenui Yozuru's shikigami Ononoki Yotsugi began living with me, Senjougahara Hitagi came to the Araragi household for a visit.

Why did she come for this visit? To see how I was doing in my entrance exam studies—which is to say, she wasn't so much visiting me as dropping by to ask, "Araragi-kun, you're not slacking in your studies, are you?"

However, when she arrived, she never actually got around to voicing that question—because when she entered the room, she saw the plush doll that sat there and became speechless.

I was very familiar with Senjougahara's sharp tongue by this point, so I was fully cognizant of the severity of the situation for her to be rendered speechless; however, it's obvious to say that the presence of a stuffed animal

or two in the bedroom of a high school boy would not be enough for her to become unable to speak.

No, she was rendered silent by the true identity of the particular plush doll that she was looking at: Ononoki Yotsugi.

"No, it's not entirely the true identity that is rendering me speechless here. If I came into my boyfriend's room and found *any* life-size doll of a little girl, I would be equally unable to speak…"

Now it was my turn to be speechless.

I would like to think that when she turned away for a second, she was *not* contemplating leaving altogether.

"Well? What is this? As your girlfriend, I am requesting an explanation."

"It's not exactly a simple thing to explain… It would be a bit inconvenient if I laid it all out…"

To be more specific, there would be massive spoilers.

I had sworn that I wouldn't keep any secrets from Senjougahara when it came to aberrations, but I wasn't trying to keep anything secret; it was just difficult to explain.

And what logical explanation could possibly exist for a guy to keep in his house, as a doll, someone with whom he once had what could be called a "fight to the death"?

"… Well, I guess I'll allow anything, as long as it's not getting in the way of your entrance exam studying, Araragi-kun. But isn't your house starting to turn into something of a… youkai house?"

"A youkai house…"

What an awful name to call it!

But, then again, I supposed that I was something of a youkai myself, which meant that any house in which I lived could reasonably be called a youkai house—however, when it came to Ononoki-chan, if anyone else was around, she perfectly played the role of an inanimate doll, even if that person were to poke her, pet her, and kiss her on the cheek as Senjougahara did.

Although I supposed that she wasn't really playing the role of a doll, because that's ultimately what she really was—"Also, just what exactly are you doing to my doll? Why would you kiss it on the cheek?"

"It's piqued my curiosity. Also, you seem to be forgetting something, Araragi-kun: I love all cute girls."

"Wasn't that Kanbaru's thing…?"

I began to have suspicions about it being an entirely one-sided attachment that bound Kanbaru to Senjougahara to form the Valhalla Duo.

"Can I take this home with me?"

"Of course not."

"Are you *sure* that I can't?"

"Saying 'sure' in italics doesn't change anything."

"*Are you sure that I can't?*"

"How would italicizing the entire sentence help?!"[35]

Ononoki-chan didn't react to our back-and-forth at all.

Ononoki-chan played the role of an inorganic doll so well that even I began to believe it, even though she had been moving around and talking right up until Senjougahara buzzed in on the intercom from the front door. Oh, right, Ononoki-chan really *is* an inorganic doll.

Perhaps inorganic was the wrong word, since, strictly speaking, the material that composed her body was an actual human corpse. Which reminded me that I had something horrifying and disgusting casually sitting in my room with me.

And it made Senjougahara, who was continuing to pet the doll, look like a witch.

"I see. So I really can't take her, then. But I asked specifically because I was thinking for your mistake, Araragi-kun."

---

[35] In the original, rather than italics, these words are written in katakana, which sounds stilted and foreign.

"Why would you think for my mistake? You should be thinking for my sake."[36]

I said.

"So, just what mistake of mine made you think that I would let you take Ononoki-chan home with you?"

"Well, you're supposed to be studying, but you have this cute doll here staring at you, and wouldn't that be a distraction? Wouldn't that make you incapable of focusing?"

"Incapable…?"

What are you, my wife?

But she made a pointed observation.

Strictly speaking, Ononoki-chan was not mine, but instead my little sister Tsukihi's, so she didn't spend all of her time sitting in my room. However, regardless of her cute appearance that implored one to look at her, having anyone watch as you studied was not exactly a pleasant experience.

"Fufu. But it's okay, Araragi-kun. I brought something just in case of a situation like this."

"If you were prepared for a situation like this, then it doesn't make sense for you to have been speechless back at the start of the story."

"Do you want to hear my genius idea for solving your problem, Araragi-kun?"[37]

"Not really…"

But I knew she was going to tell me anyway.

"In order to render a cute doll powerless, you simply need to have an even cuter doll on hand. Tah-dah!"

And, in time with her sound effect, she took something out of her bag.

---

[36] Hitagi replaced the ため (*tame*, "benefit, sake") from 阿良々木くんのため (*Araragi-kun no tame*, "Araragi-kun's sake") with 駄目 (*dame*), which is how the "can't" from the earlier lines was written, but can also mean "useless, no good".

[37] Pun between 名案 (*meian*, "good idea") and the word 明暗 (*meian*, "light and dark") in the expression 明暗を分ける (*meian wo wakeru*, lit. "separating light and dark", meaning deciding the outcome between two opposite options).

"I present to you the 'Senjougahara Hitagi' Nendoroid as produced by Good Smile Company. If you set this on your desk, no matter what distractions may come your way, you'll never find yourself tempted to slack off."

"…"

She really just tried to do a full-on tie-in product advertisement without any hesitation at all…!

And as for her proposal being a genius idea, the only thing that she seemed to have achieved was putting another pair of eyes on me, and on that point, I was left speechless.

"From 'good morning' to 'good night,' the Hitagi figure will be there to live alongside you. Note: her hair does not grow."

"But you can swap it out."

"How about having two in the house to help you study for the entrance exams?"

"Don't try to upsell them on a second one."

HITAGI SALAMANDER

Yomiuri Shimbun
23 November 2013

Onimonogatari BD/DVD *vol. 2*
28 May 2014

Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Wicked ways vs. wicked tongue.[38]
Our love tale, love-hate edition.

Translation: Haremless

Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* is a book about a world in which publication regulations, oppression of the freedom of speech, and censorship are strengthened whenever those issues cause discord in society; a book about book burning, but you could also read it from a completely different point of view and see that it's an outstanding piece of entertainment written with a playful mood, and yet it still makes a sly bastard like me enjoy it. Surprisingly, it may be more interesting to read this book without any preconceived notions. To start with, the protagonist, Guy Montag, is one of the people who burn the books. He's a book burner who dresses like a firefighter, douses books with kerosene, and burns them to ashes. Almost sounds like a rock star, doesn't he. Well, eventually, he meets a seventeen-year-old girl named Clarisse and slowly begins to change. You could even take it as a very well-written "boy meets girl" story, although Montag isn't exactly a boy at his age.

[38] Literally "poison fang" (毒牙, *dokuga*), meaning sinister ways, vs. "poison tongue" (毒舌, *dokuzetsu*), meaning harsh.

"I've read *Fahrenheit 451* before, if that's what you wanted to talk about," Senjougahara said in a cold voice; she has an attitude like she doesn't even want to chat with me. Though in the case of an indiscriminate reader like Senjougahara, she may not like that I talked about a masterpiece in that way. Sort of like how a mystery fan would hate for *Sherlock Holmes* to be talked about like it's a character-driven story and not a piece of detective fiction. But how I read a book is my choice. All the different ways of reading a book are equal, and there are no better or worse ways. If you set out to limit that, it's probably no different than suppressing the freedom of speech.

I knew Senjougahara would feel uncomfortable if I brought that up, so I pointed it out right away, and once I did, she seemed even more displeased than before… naturally.

"Don't play games with me, that wasn't what I was thinking at all. My memory is just a bit fuzzy since I've read it four times, and my impression of it was different each time. Since the first time was when I was in second grade, I read 'Fahrenheit' as 'Farrah N. Heit' and thought, 'who's that?'"[39]

"How can you expect me not to make fun of you after hearing that? If I can't make fun of you, who am I going to make fun of?"

As soon as the words left my mouth, I thought "crap". I should have just ignored her little anecdote and continued the conversation. The moment I accidentally replied like that, I was caught up in her clever rhetoric—I was careless. My arbitrarily criticizing her slip-up has changed this from a simple exchange into a rally. This melodramatic girl has a sense for turning the person she's talking to into her audience by making a fool of herself. It's an unsuitable style of deception for me, personally.

"The second time was around the end of elementary school. I thought, 'Isn't 451 degrees the temperature paper burns at? Wouldn't a person burn before it even got that hot?'"

---

[39] In the original text, Hitagi misreads 華氏 (*kashi*, "Fahrenheit") as はな氏 (*hana-shi*, "Mr. Hana").

"You were a twisted little brat, weren't you."

"I can't help it, I was inhospitable for a while."

"Inhospitable?"

"My tongue slipped. I meant that I was in the hospital for a while."[40]

"…"

Senjougahara continued, ignoring my silence, "The third time… was when I was in middle school; I read it for my summer homework. I wrote quite the exemplary book report on it. I even singed the edges of the paper a bit for some added effect. The teacher got quite mad at me, though."

"That's what I'd call a good teacher. What about the fourth time?"

"The fourth time was when I was in the first year of high—" Senjougahara began and, as if suddenly remembering something unpleasant, she bit down on her lower lip, forcibly stopping herself from speaking. She bit it so hard she might even have bit her tongue. I wonder, what could it be that she would go so far to stop herself from saying?

Well, it may not have anything to do with her impressions or the contents of the book. She probably just doesn't want to tell me about the time that she read it, that is to say, she doesn't want to talk about when she was a first-year in high school. It's almost certainly because back then was when I met this girl, although that could hardly be called "boy meets girl".

"… Anyway, I read it four times, but I never got the impression that it was the kind of story you were saying it is. I guess you could say that the fact that the interpretation of a novel depends on the reader is what makes them one of the best ways to tell a story."

"I'm just shocked that there's someone out there who'd read the same book four times."

"I wonder how book burning is going to happen once digital books have become more widespread. I don't think most electronics would burn at 451 degrees."

"It'd still be hot enough to destroy them."

---

[40] In the original text, Hitagi says she was in the sodium oxide (酸化ナトリウム, *sanka natoriumu*) instead of the sanatorium (サナトリウム, *sanatoriumu*).

More importantly, if you want to erase digital data there are more efficient ways of doing it than burning the device it's on.

"I see," said Senjougahara. "No matter what it was like in the 1950s when *Fahrenheit 451* was published, with all the other different types of media there are these days, it may not even be worth it to cover books in kerosene and burn them now."

"Are you saying that humanity's two greatest inventions, fire and paper, are already out of date? I wonder about that, I don't really feel like that's the case."

They say that people aren't interested in literature anymore.

Apparently, the number of people who read books is dwindling.

Apparently, you barely even find people reading books on the train anymore. Is that really the case? From my personal experience, you'd rarely ever get on a train and not see at least one person reading a book.

"Well, even if it's not exactly 'boy meets girl', our book burner, Montag, does eventually start having different thoughts and ideas once he meets Clarisse. What do you think about that?"

"Hmm?"

Considering she seems to want to end this conversation with me quickly, Senjougahara brought up a question likely to expand the topic—even though it would be fine if I lied, I decided to answer honestly.

"I was very moved, of course. He's a book burner who has a change of heart when he learns the beauty of books and is influenced by them; I couldn't help but think of myself."

"…"

Senjougahara fell silent for a while, then sighed disappointedly and said, "Actually…"

"I, of all people, almost foolishly thought, 'even a person like you sometimes has a change of heart someday, right?'"

"You—You did, didn't you. Have a change of heart."

"Yes, but that was…"

"Not a change of heart, but falling in love," she murmured, and for the first time today, she smiled.

I wanted to say that there must have been something more behind her words, but just this once, they didn't seem to be part of some carefully planned statement, so I decided to just ignore it.

I didn't really feel like touching upon the topic.

I'd probably get burned if I brought it up; she's fairly hot-blooded. The lesson I should take away from this is, even though there's that old saying that "you can count yourself among the friends of the wise men of old by reading books", you can only call yourself someone's lover by living in the present with them.

Princess Beauty

Heroine Book 3: Oshino Shinobu
19 December 2013
Wazamonogatari
14 January 2016

Translation: Mirrored Translations

The following is a true story from six hundred years ago. However, I would prefer you think of it as fiction. Why? It is too old a story to have much measure of authenticity, and it has neither lessons nor morals—I am sure such a story would be better taken as a lie.

Around six hundred years ago, in a country whose name has been lost to time, there was a very beautiful girl. The only daughter of an affluent noble, her portrait adorned the homes of every family in the nation—there were none who did not know of her beauty.

Her smooth blond hair, her large eyes, her small head, her bright red lips, her delicate neck, her gossamer skin, her fingers like slender icefish, and her slender, long legs, flowing down from her thin, high waist.

Men and women, young and old, regardless of status were all mesmerized. Simply for her beauty, she was honored with a title by His

Majesty the Emperor; the whole nation called her "Princess Beauty" and loved her. The rumors spread, and the citizens formed a great line before her castle, trying to catch a glimpse of her. And so, the rare charm of Princess Beauty far exceeding their expectations, they brought her gifts. Day after day, the mountain of presents before the castle grew larger.

The musician said, "I have made Your Highness' beauty into a song. Please accept it," and played his violin.

The poet said, "I have made Your Highness' beauty into a poem. Please accept it," and his voice resounded in recitation.

The artist said, "I have made Your Highness' beauty into a sculpture. Please accept it," and carved a hundred statues.

But none of their gifts made the princess smile. In deep melancholy she gazed at the mountain of presents, and yet, the way that sorrow tinged her face was so beautiful that nobody noticed she was not smiling.

"Nobody will look at me," the princess lamented, alone in her room. "They extol me as beautiful, beautiful, but they say nothing more. They know nothing of what kind of person I am. They do not know how I am on the inside."

That was Princess Beauty's distress.

Everyone, certainly, was charmed by her beauty. They praised her. Above all else, they looked at her. However, they simply looked at her outward appearance, and no matter what she did or what she said, they paid no attention to her behavior or her actions.

Nobody knew how she was on the inside, nor did they try to learn.

Whatever she did, whatever she said, they thought of nothing but the phrase "Princess Beauty". Whether she succeeded or failed, whether she did right or wrong, their evaluation was always the same. Whatever she did was beautiful. Beautiful asleep and beautiful awake. "Princess Beauty" was the perfect name for her.

Is such beauty as that not rather devilish in nature?

"It hardly seems to matter whether or not I have a will of my own. But I am not a slave to my appearance. This beauty with which I so happened to be born has proved nothing but a nuisance. I want them to see how I am on the inside, not just on the outside."

To not rely on her own beauty.

An old witch who had lived in the country since ancient times was moved by her magnificent strength of will.

She stole into the castle at night, originally simply curious about the rumors she had heard; however, she decided to grant the princess' wish.

"Princess Beauty. I will render your beauty transparent, such that nobody will be able to see it. Instead, I will make it so everyone around you can see your inner heart. From now on, it will be a matter of how you are on the inside."

The old witch chanted a spell and waved her wand, and the princess' gossamer skin became truly transparent.

"Thank you. Thank you."

"Princess Beauty" was grateful from the bottom of her heart.

A heart now in plain sight of all.

Her exterior beauty cleared away, the princess' exposed heart was unparalleled in its beauty. Her true nature, which until then was concealed by her resplendent appearance, had been made visible by the old witch—even while she remained inside the castle, its radiance spread through all the corners of the nation.

Ashamed of never being able to see the utter beauty of his daughter's heart, the moment after saying his morning greetings, the princess' father jumped off the balcony to punish himself. Proud of giving birth to a daughter of such magnificent disposition, as if in so doing she had

completed the role for which she had been born into the world, the princess' mother peacefully passed away after eating breakfast.

The musician, believing Princess Beauty's kindness to be altogether inexpressible through song, instead offered her his most precious belongings, more precious than his life—cutting off the hands he used to play his instruments, he offered them to the princess as a suitable gift. The poet, believing Princess Beauty's wisdom to be altogether inexpressible through poetry, instead offered her his most precious belonging, more precious than his life—tearing out the tongue he used to recite his poems, he offered it to the princess as a suitable gift. The artist, believing Princess Beauty's bravery to be altogether inexpressible through sculpture, instead offered her his most precious belongings, more precious than his life—gouging out the eyes he used to inspect his materials, he offered them to the princess as a suitable gift.

All the nation's citizens burned the portraits of the princess which, until then, they had treasured. They wondered why they had been so dedicated to such a pointless decoration. More importantly, they thought, look at the purity of "Princess Beauty". Look at her righteousness. Who could have imagined such a meritorious heart existed in the world? Is that not true beauty?

But not everyone owned things more precious than their lives. So, reluctantly, begrudgingly, thinking that such trifles could never be suitable for the princess, they offered her their lives. They offered up their own lives, their relatives' lives, their children's lives, their grandchildren's lives. The mountain of gifts before the castle became a mountain of corpses, and it did not take much time for it to grow taller than the castle walls.

"Ah! Such tragedy! To think it would come to this!"

Despairing at the mountain of bodies and river of blood that had been sacrificed for her sake, the princess went to the old witch to try to lift the

magic spell. But it was too late: the old witch was the very first to behold the princess' inner beauty, and had long since offered up what was more precious to her than her life—the head in which she had cultivated many long years' worth of knowledge. The princess broke down crying before the old witch's severed head.

That pitiable form, that beautiful heart which shed tears for others, bewitched the nation more and more. They scrambled and competed to offer the princess their lives, or what was more precious than their lives. To console the princess, they threw their lives away one after another, smiling all the while. They seemed so very happy to be able to behold her beautiful heart without being deceived by her appearance, and to die for her sake.

The ill repute of the growing mountain of corpses—or rather, the castle of corpses—naturally became well-known in the imperial capital and neighboring countries; however, whenever the latest armies would come rushing in, they would succumb to Princess Beauty's power. Their preconceptions and prejudices swept away, their hearts washed clean, happily and of their own desire, they became part of the mountain of corpses.

"Enough. Everyone is dying. Everyone is dying for me. I cannot save any of them. The more I do, the more I speak, people die. I wish only to die."

But she was unable to die. The strength of her heart would not permit it. She could not even go mad.

"In that case, go on a journey."

The old witch's severed head spoke. The tears the princess had spilled caused a miracle. For just one moment, the old woman had come back to life.

"Someday, you may be able to help those who die the sake of your accursed beauty. Until then, distance yourself from people. Live alone, and

do not grow close with anyone. You mustn't stay in one place for too long. If you do, people will soon come to sacrifice their lives to you."

With that, the old woman breathed her last once again.

Thus, "Princess Beauty" departed the castle that had been stained bright red with the color of blood and the great mountain of corpses beside it, and set off on an unending journey. In order to prevent any more people from dying, she followed the old witch's curse-like advice. It was a lonesome flight, one in which nobody could accompany her. It was some time after this that she became a vampire, but these were the circumstances in which the princess—Kissshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade's bloodstained, vampiric legend began.

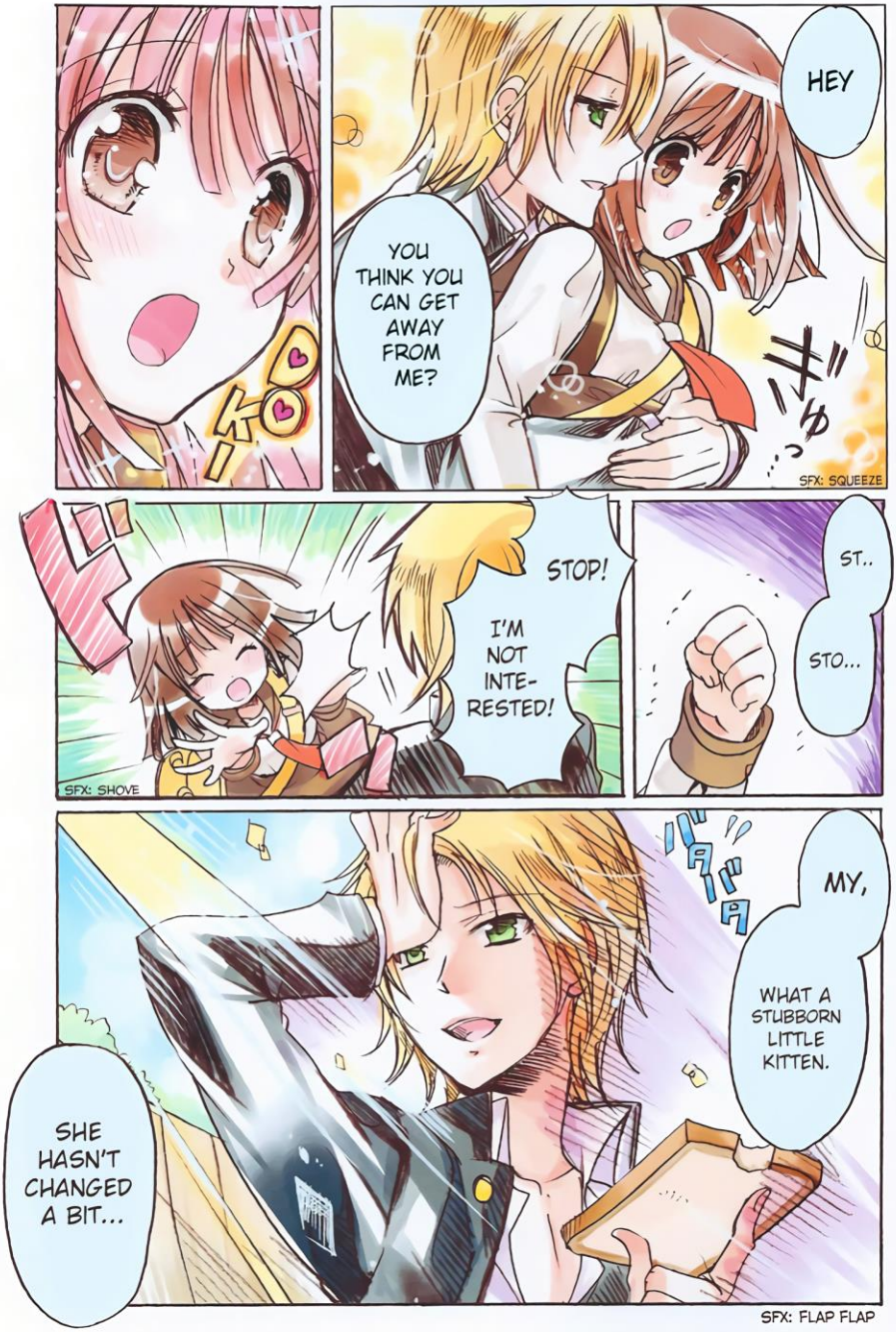
And six hundred years later, for the first time, she was able to save one tiny life that had been sacrificed to her pure heart.

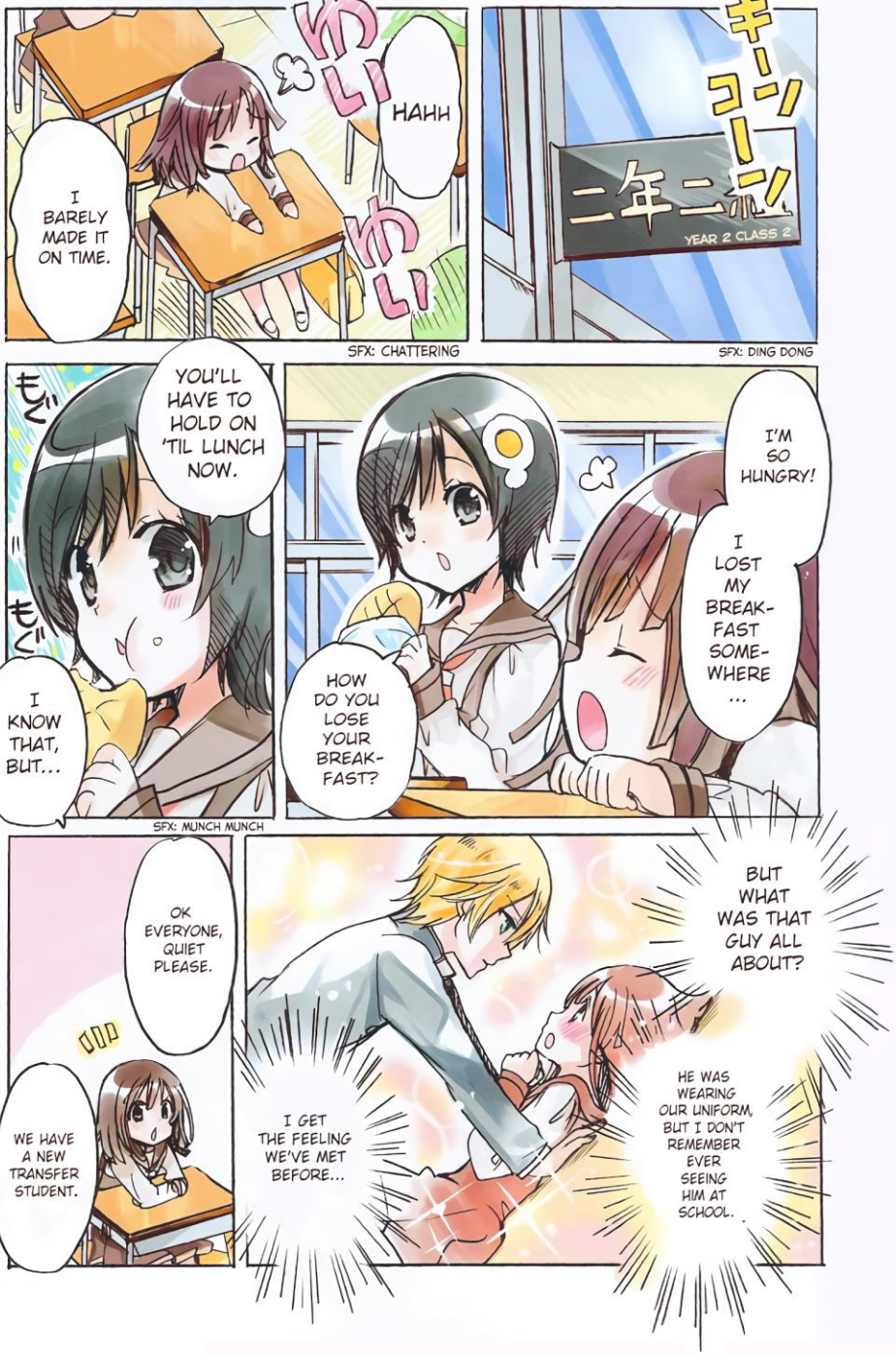
Bewitched by an imposter!?
The beginning of a special project.
Introducing a love comedy in full color♥
Heroine Book 4: Sengoku Nadeko
30 January 2014
Kizunever Scanlations
キミとなでっこ!
Kimi to Nadekko!
作 西尾維新
Written by Nisio Isin
漫画 遠山えま
Manga by Tooyama Ema

I'M SENGOKU NADEKO!
YOUR AVERAGE MIDDLE SCHOOL SECOND YEAR STUDENT, ATTENDING 15TH PUBLIC JUNIOR HIGH.
I BETTER HURRY ...
!
どしーん
SFX: CRASH
OH NO! I'M LATE!
I'M GONNA GET IN TROUBLE WITH JOUKA-SENSEI AGAIN!
AAAA
SFX: RUNNING

SFX: EMBRACING

SFX: KYUNN


HEY
YOU THINK YOU CAN GET AWAY FROM ME?
SFX: SQUEEZE
ST..
STO...
STOP!
I'M NOT INTE-RESTED!
SFX: SHOVE
MY,
WHAT A STUBBORN LITTLE KITTEN.
SHE HASN'T CHANGED A BIT...
SFX: FLAP FLAP


HAHH
I BARELY MADE IT ON TIME.
ゆい
ゆい
SFX: CHATTERING
キーンコーン
二年二ホ
YEAR 2 CLASS 2
SFX: DING DONG
I'M SO HUNGRY!
I LOST MY BREAK-FAST SOME-WHERE ...
HOW DO YOU LOSE YOUR BREAK-FAST?
YOU'LL HAVE TO HOLD ON 'TIL LUNCH NOW.
I KNOW THAT, BUT...
もぐ
もぐ
SFX: MUNCH MUNCH
OK EVERYONE, QUIET PLEASE.
WE HAVE A NEW TRANSFER STUDENT.
BUT WHAT WAS THAT GUY ALL ABOUT?
I GET THE FEELING WE'VE MET BEFORE...
HE WAS WEARING OUR UNIFORM, BUT I DON'T REMEMBER EVER SEEING HIM AT SCHOOL.

Hokkyokusei Ran
北極星連
THIS IS HOKKYOKUSEI RAN, HE TRANSFERRED FROM SHOUGO ACADEMY.
BE SURE TO GET ALONG WITH HIM.
NOW, HOKKYOKUSEI IS INDEED THE HEIR TO THE HOKKYOKU FINANCIAL COMPANY
BUT HE TRANSFERRED TO OUR SCHOOL FOR SOME REASON ALL THE SAME.
SO DON'T BE SHY, TREAT HIM AS YOU WOULD ANYONE ELSE.
AHHH!
ガタ
YOU'RE FROM THIS MORNING ...!
SFX: CLATTERING
HEH, WHAT DID I TELL YOU?
YOU CAN'T GET AWAY FROM ME.
SFX: STEP

DO
KYUUN♡
YOU FORGOT THIS NADEKO-CHAN.
YOU HAVE TO MAKE SURE TO EAT YOUR BREAK-FAST.
パシッ
SFX: SLAP
ドキン
HUH? WHY ...?
HOW DO YOU KNOW MY NAME?
ドキン
ぎゅ
COULD YOU STOP IT?
YOU SEE, THIS GIRL IS MINE.
SFX: EMBRACING

NADEKO -NEE
DON'T SAY THINGS THAT COULD CAUSE A MISUNDER-STANDING!
AREN'T WE JUST NEIGH-BOURS AND CHILDHOOD FRIENDS? WE'RE LIKE BROTHER AND SISTER!
SUI-KUN!
WAI- WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT,
I'M A MAN TOO, YOU KNOW
IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU STOPPED THINKING OF ME AS A LITTLE BROTHER
ぱしん
出席簿
DOKI
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOU-
EH? … SUI-KUN
DOKI

SFX: SMACK

IF YOU WANT TO FIGHT EACH OTHER, I'M AFRAID I'LL HAVE TO ASK YOU TO DO IT IN YOUR OWN TIME.
CLASS IS ABOUT TO START
JOUKA-SENSEI ...
出席簿
出席簿
SFX: SMACK SMACK
YOU THREE, COME TO THE STUDENT GUIDANCE COUNSELOUR'S ROOM AFTER CLASS.
ESPE-CIALLY YOU SENGOKU -SAN.
I'LL BE GIVING YOU AN EXTRA SPECIAL PRIVATE INTERVIEW
A... A PRIVATE INTER-VIEW?
フル。。。
JOUKA-SENSEI ...
SFX: TREMBLE

DON'T TELL ME YOU ARE THE KIND OF TEACHER WHO WOULD RAISE A HAND AGAINST HIS STUDENTS?
WAIT SENSEI, NADEKO-CHAN'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS
I'M THE ONLY ONE YOU SHOULD BE GETTING MAD AT
I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW THAT PROTECTING STUDENTS IS MY JOB.
SUCH IMPERTINENCE. THIS IS WHY I DETEST RICH KIDS
ALWAYS JABBERING YOUR IRRESPONSIBLE MOUTH LIKE A CHILD
SFX: LEER
HAS BEEN MY JOB ALONE FROM THE DAY I WAS BORN
NOBODY ASKED YOU, SENSEI. GO FIND YOUR OWN GIRL TO PROTECT.
'CAUSE PROTECTING NADEKO-NEE

SFX: CRACKLE
JOUKA-SENSEI ...
SUI-KUN ...
HOKKYO-KUSEI -KUN...
HEY... STOP IT YOU THREE ...
TO MY ORDINARY MIDDLE SCHOOL LIFE!?
WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN ...
つづく!
to be continued!

HITAGI THROWING

Heroine Book 5: Senjougahara Hitagi
1 April 2014
Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Translation: Tigoris Translates

As someone who has been devoted to Senjougahara Hitagi for some years now, it feels like a betrayal of some kind to say something like this, but when I first met her as a first-year in middle school, the impression that I had of her was not exactly a positive one.

To be more specific, one might say that it was a negative impression.

I thought, "Just who is this girl?"

If it's okay to be a bit more informal, then my more exact thought was, "This girl's bad news." Now, I'd like you to cut me some slack here, because at the time I had only just graduated from elementary school, and I was, in appearance, personality, ability, and intellect, a brat of a meager twelve years of age.

However, I will also firmly say that Senjougahara-senpai was not entirely without fault of her own; in fact, let me emphasize that she was not without fault. After all, when she—the track and field club's very own ace—came storming into the gym during basketball practice, it seemed like the start of a raid, and all of the basketball club members flinched. And she

didn't come alone. She brought along a large group of her followers, which was not limited to other track and field members and included students from not only the second- and third-year groups, but there were even some first-years mixed in, too. To an observer, it looked as if a feudal lord had descended upon the gymnasium along with his full retinue of retainers.

To put it another way, it's like when Mitchi showed up in *Slam Dunk.*

She was smiling softly and had a gentle manner, but that only made her all the more intimidating, in part because her cronies had an unusual air about them.

"You're Kanbaru-san, then? I've heard rumors that you're quick on your feet—if it's no bother, may I observe you?"

What is she, a noble lady?

That was what I wanted to say, but back then Senjougahara-senpai was like that—she was like a character taken straight from a shoujo novel.

It put a shiver down my spine to discover that this person really existed. And allow me to clarify that when I say "a shiver down my spine," I don't mean it in the good way—looking back on it now, it might be more accurate to say that I recoiled with shock.

I had an instinctive feeling that her request was strange.

And so was she.

To put it simply, that just about sums up my first impression of her—of course, Senjougahara-senpai was famous, so after I had enrolled in the school and even before I joined the basketball club, I had already heard her name a number of times.

She and Hanekawa-senpai were the two poster children for my school—to the point that we were told (by a teacher during the entrance ceremony) not to cross "those two" if we wanted to make it in the school (at the time I didn't know which two the teacher was talking about, but, in retrospect, the warning was largely accurate).

However, as you know, I was a twelve-year-old who had, for various reasons, a rather extraordinary obsession with running fast—but because of those same reasons, I was unable to join the track and field club. Nevertheless, I took an interest in the ace of the track and field club,

Senjougahara-senpai, and went to observe her running during that April, even though I had not become a trial member of the team.

I didn't realize that it was possible for a person to run so beautifully.

It took my breath away.

My running form was not something that I had received coaching for—even now, I have not received any education in sprinting, so my running form is self-taught. Being self-taught is not a bad thing; it's a perfectly acceptable running style, and I never had a complex about how I ran, but when I saw Senjougahara-senpai run on that day, the beauty of her form stood in stark contrast to the frantic flailing of my own.

She displayed the final form of human running.

She was the idealized runner.

But I could not attempt to copy her—she was not like me, and I was not like her.

I was painfully aware of our differences.

I also remember thinking that the track uniforms were erotic, but that's neither here nor there. I'd had no intention of joining the track club, as I said before, but after seeing her run, whatever lingering regrets I had were gone.

It blew me away.

To look at it another way, it was seeing Senjougahara-senpai run that day that made me into the basketball player that I am today—it was easy to forget what had caused me to become so passionately devoted to basketball, but I'll save that discussion of "you never know what event will become a turning point in your life" for another time.

You could say that I'm not really a shy person, but when it came to Senjougahara-senpai, I made it my policy to actively avoid coming in contact with her, so for her to seek me out on her own was so surprising as to strike me dumb. Add in her whole "storybook princess" demeanor, and I turned into a stuttering, stumbling idiot—so, suffice to say, on the day that Senjougahara-senpai (and her retinue) observed my basketball practice, I was not exactly doing my best.

"May we speak, Kanbaru-san?"

After practice, Senjougahara-senpai approached me—and while I didn't exactly feel enticed by her invitation, my heart skipped a beat regardless.

Looking at her up close, it was hard to believe that a girl with such mature features was only a year older than myself.

"You're as fast as the rumors say—so how about it? Do you have any interest in transferring to the track club? Why not spend your youth in friendly competition with me?"

… She was an impressively bold headhunter. By the way, the basketball team captain (a third-year) was also there at the time as Senjougahara-senpai (a second-year) tried to steal me from the team, but the captain acted as if it were none of her business and didn't interrupt.

Just what were you hoping to find by examining the ball that closely, captain?

You can turn it over as many times as you want; you're not going to find a hole.

I was disappointed in the team captain, but setting that aside, I was happy to receive the invitation—no matter the situation or the way that it was said, I would always be happy to receive praise for the legs which I was so proud of. It made my heart dance to be acknowledged.

That simplicity still has not changed.

I've always been an idiot when it comes to this.

That said, it still didn't mean that I was so stupid as to blindly be scouted just because someone praised me. I'm an idiot who can think. So I politely, but firmly, declined her invitation while trying to hint that she had been a bit rude, but without being so blatant as to damage her reputation or be rude myself.

"Better luck next time."

Huh?

What is this memory?

Who is this cheeky little brat? Oh, it's me.

Was I at the age where I reacted to authority with petulance? Or was I afraid that if I didn't reject her firmly, she would wear away my resolve and convince me to join the track club? Either way, maybe that wasn't the exact

phrasing that I used (I would like to think so), but, even if so, I still rejected Senjougahara-senpai in a rude way.

"Oh my. You're quite spirited, aren't you? I'm becoming even more interested in you."

Senjougahara-senpai replied in a cool and composed tone (looking back on it now, I can't help but think, "Who the hell are you?"), but the retinue of club members assembled behind her looked to be trying to use their eyes to stab me through.

Oh man, I'm so dead.

The crowd of cronies looked ready to get physical with me, but Senjougahara-senpai smiled and held a hand out to stop them without looking, then said, "It's okay. I like nothing more than to tame cute girls like this."

Seriously, who the hell are you?

Perhaps my imagination is adding to the memory a bit, so maybe my memory of middle school second-year Senjougahara-senpai isn't perfectly accurate, but the big picture of us having a stressful, if brief, interview as our first contact is certainly true.

"Have a pleasant day."

And with those parting words, Senjougahara-senpai left.

Even in the face of my unfavorable and downright rude response, she remained elegant. She carried on with that noble air from start to finish, and while those events did hurt me, I thought that it was for the best.

Even if I had to be rude to do it, it would be better to firmly reject her than to reply so mildly that she continued to hold out hopes for me—of course, having rejected one of the famous girls of the school, I suspected that I may have set myself up to have a difficult life as a middle school girl, but, well, even if I had tried to stay in her good favor, I would likely have bungled that too.

Come if you're going to come; I'll take you on.

That was the stance that I mentally took, and I was not disappointed.

But the one who came to find me in the gym the next day was not one or more of Senjougahara-senpai's retinue come to put me in my place, but

instead it was Senjougahara-senpai herself—without anyone else, just herself.

"Hello, everyone. We are blessed with lovely weather today, aren't we? May I observe your practice once again?"

The older girls in the basketball club began to murmur to each other—it sounded different from the reaction from the previous day, and I later learned that it was because Senjougahara-senpai very rarely went anywhere unaccompanied.

She didn't choose to have people follow her around, but instead, it was more that she was the kind of person that people naturally gravitated to and followed—which meant that the only way she could arrive in the gym without at least a small group of followers was for her to have told them to leave her alone.

Why?

I told her "better luck next time," so did she actually think that she should try again and hopefully have better luck on the second attempt? And she decided that coming on her own might be the factor that would convince me?

Several of the basketball team members volunteered to make Senjougahara-senpai more comfortable, and so she sat off to the side in a comfortable chair, partaking in the snacks she had been provided while watching us practice with a smile. Or rather, she watched *me* practice. I couldn't read anything from her body language.

I had been welcomed into the basketball club with a good bit of fanfare because of my speed, so it wasn't as if I had never been observed while playing before, but there was something about being watched so intensely that made it difficult to play. On that day, I missed an unusually high percentage of shots and even made a lot of simple mistakes with dribbling—the only thing that kept me from outright failing was the speed of my legs. But seeing as Senjougahara-senpai was there to see how fast I could be, she must have been happy with the display.

"Kanbaru-san. Have you reconsidered your response to my invitation?"

"No, I'm not having second thoughts…"

I didn't go so far as to say I hadn't thought about it at all.

It was difficult to be rude to someone who showed up two days in a row to express interest in you.

"Hm. Then how about this? You and I shall have a 100-meter race, and if I win, then you will transfer into the track club. Don't you think it's a wonderful idea?"

"… So if you lose, then you'll join the basketball team?"

"Eh?"

She tilted her head in confusion.

No, don't you "Eh?" me.

There's no way that you don't understand.

"No, I will not be doing that."

She firmly rejected the idea.

"But it would mean that I will no longer come to the gym every day without fail."

"You intend to come every day…"

I told her no.

I'm pretty sure that I tried to be less rude than the day before.

"Oh."

Senjougahara-senpai seemed genuinely surprised by the response.

"How strange. Was I wrong about you?"

"About what?"

"Someone like you would be unable to back down when presented with a challenge."

"…"

That assumption of hers—was correct.

But, even if that were the case, I couldn't allow myself to race against anyone. Of course, if I accepted the challenge and won, then the whole issue would be settled. But if I were to lose… I didn't want to think about what would happen.

Also, there was the question of whether Senjougahara-senpai would actually back down if I won against her in the race—so it would be all risk with no reward.

"No thanks."

She simply said that she understood.

I fell silent, and Senjougahara-senpai left—but before she departed the gym, she cleaned up the snack wrappers and put away the chair that she had used while observing our practice. She did seem to have had a good upbringing.

I was happy if she understood that she wouldn't be able to convince me to join her club, but, thinking about it more, Senjougahara-senpai hadn't said what it was that she understood. The true meaning of her words was a mystery.

And the next day, that mystery was solved.

For the third time, Senjougahara Hitagi arrived in the gymnasium during the basketball team's practice. But unlike the first and second visits, she was not wearing her school uniform, nor was she wearing the erotic—that is to say, stylish—uniform of the track club, but she instead wore one of our own basketball uniforms.

Her back bore the number 4.

Well, actually, the number was also on the front of her jersey, so I don't suppose I needed to specify that it was on her back. Anyway, the point is that the #4 jersey belonged to the captain.

I looked back to confirm and found that, sure enough, our team captain was in the back of the gym wearing her P.E. uniform and polishing a basketball. *I just polished that one. Why are you polishing it again? Just how shiny do you want that ball to be? It'll slip out of our hands if you give it any more polish than that.*

Apparently our team captain rented out her uniform, what you might call the symbol that our team followed, to Senjougahara-senpai when she asked for it. You could say that this was the instant when all of our captain's authority vanished.

Once this whole thing was settled, there would be a *coup d'état*.

"If you will not compete with me on the track, then I will come to your field and compete with this basketball. Does this work for you?"

"Uh… huh…?"

To be entirely honest, I was mostly just feeling uneasy at that point in time, and I definitely didn't want to accept her challenge. I didn't want to, but what choice did I have when she had shown up a third time to try and convince me to join the track club?

She did, technically, ask for the "captain's" permission before doing this (it pains me that I have to put quotation marks around captain, but that reflects the sad state of affairs at the time), and so half of the gym's court was reserved for myself and Senjougahara-senpai to have our competition.

Our showdown.

Bout. Duel.

What actually followed was not as dramatic as what the words used to describe it might suggest. It wasn't instantly resolved, and there was definitely some tension during the competition, but it's a bit difficult to have much drama when the competition is just a free throw contest. Our "captain," or, I guess I should say, our captain, insisted that we have a competition where there was no risk of us coming into physical contact with each other. I was a new member on the team, and while Senjougahara-senpai was a veteran athlete, she was not a basketball player. So, to be on the safe side, it was decided that we could not have a true one-on-one match on the off chance that either of us should get injured.

Whoever made ten baskets first would win.

There were no handicaps, and the competition proceeded in a simple and straightforward manner—we took turns taking our shots, and after thirty minutes, it was all over.

The final score was ten to nine.

It was a close match—which Senjougahara-senpai won.

We both missed a number of shots, but we remained neck-and-neck throughout, until, in the end, Senjougahara-senpai managed to get the final basket.

"It was a good competition." Senjougahara spoke, brushing aside her long, elegant hair. "Kanbaru-san, it seems that you are more suited for the basketball court than the track—I hope that you will continue to give it your best."

She turned on her heel and left the gym.

I had already been thinking of some way to avoid taking part in races (such as by focusing on long jump or high jump) and had resigned myself to having to join the track club, so when Senjougahara-senpai simply departed, I was left dumbfounded for a moment.

But it was only a moment.

I hurriedly chased after Senjougahara-senpai—and I full-out sprinted, so I quickly caught up to her elegant walk, and I grabbed her wrist.

Grabbing someone by the wrist is a forceful way to stop them. One might say that it's wild and violent, which is to say, it's very me. Senjougahara-senpai turned to look at me with obvious suspicion, and perhaps she was letting her real self show through, because her gaze was sharp.

Under that sharp gaze, I asked, "Was this your goal from the start?"

It was almost more like an interrogation than a simple question, which was also very like me.

"You wanted to compete with me, beat me, and then drop me?"

"… What do you mean? For what reason would I do such a thing?"

Senjougahara-senpai asked back seriously without any hint of evasion.

"To protect me," I replied.

The outline was simple enough—there was no mistake that the original reason that she had come to the gym was to scout me for the track team after hearing rumors about me.

And she would surely have anticipated that there was a chance that I would say no to her invitation.

But what she did not anticipate was the super strength of my refusal—that is, my more-than-necessary, full-on rejection. And I had rejected her so rudely in front of all of her followers.

Senjougahara-senpai managed to keep things peaceful at that time, but as they say, bad news travels fast. A newly enrolled first-year who dared to bare her teeth at the elegant and skilled Senjougahara Hitagi would be a rumor that reached every ear in record time, and when it did… my school life would have a very bleak outlook.

I had planned—which is to say, foolishly assumed—to deal with that problem when the time came, but Senjougahara-senpai had a way to prevent it from happening in the first place.

She was able to rein in the people who followed her directly, but she had no way of anticipating what others might do upon hearing the rumor—people are good on their own, but there's plenty of bad to be found in a group. That was why Senjougahara-senpai needed to get ahead of the rumors and put an end to the story—and in a way that would let her be in the winning position. But it wasn't just about her winning—she needed to win in such a way that it would be a close battle so as not to tarnish the reputation of the first-year rising star of the basketball team.

And so we had a free-throw contest.

… Thinking about it more, it had been strange for the team captain to just go along with whatever Senjougahara-senpai said, but then also be the one to decide on the rules for the contest in the way that she did… In other words, by having us take turns to do our free throws, they would be able to control the scores, and the two of them must have arranged the entire circumstance of our contest from the start, back whenever Senjougahara-senpai had gone to ask to borrow the uniform (which means I was completely wrong about the captain).

If I had accepted her challenge on the second day—which would have been the best for Senjougahara-senpai—she could have controlled her speed so as to put on a show of it being a close race between the two of us.

She must have a lot of confidence to have been so sure that she could "barely win in a neck-and-neck competition" in not only running on the track but also a free throw competition. That she was able to pull it off so cleanly, however, meant that I could not fault her for that confidence.

By clearly and definitively beating me, and then just as clearly and definitively acknowledging my ability in a public space—which is to say, giving me permission to continue playing basketball—she would knock down the perceived conflict and defuse the situation with her fans who might have wished me harm.

"… Supposing that I had been thinking along those lines…"

Senjougahara-senpai spoke now in a flat, sober voice that was entirely unlike how she had been talking up until that point.

"Wouldn't you be throwing away my consideration by confronting me and voicing your thoughts to me? Are you not undoing what I've just done?"

She was trying to tell me that I should follow her lead and subtly accept what she did for me. I let go of her wrist.

And then I took hold of her hand instead.

I did so gently.

I copied Senjougahara-senpai's mannerisms of softness and kindness—she no doubt thought that I was trying to have a friendly parting handshake to show that there were no hard feelings, but instead I did something that was completely unexpected and kissed the back of her hand.

"W… What?!"

She practically screamed the word with surprise, and I straightened.

"No, I don't think so." I declared. "Because I have decided to accept your kindness and go far beyond what is necessary to repay it—Senjougahara-senpai."

From now on, I am your dog.

That's what I told her.

Senjougahara Hitagi and Kanbaru Suruga. The pair that would go on to be called the Valhalla Duo began here.

"Are you an idiot?"

I still think that those words and the cold smile that came with them were probably Senjougahara-senpai's genuine, impartial reaction to what I had said.

SURUGA PALACE

ONIMONOGATARI BD/DVD VOL. 1
23 April 2014
MIJIKANAMONOGATARI
11 September 2024

An uncanny relationship formed by a quirk of fate[41]
Pray for a good match.

TRANSLATION: HAREMLESS

Read *The Red House Mystery* by A. A. Milne, Kanbaru Suruga. When it comes to Milne, he is, without it needing to be said, most famous for being the children's author who wrote *Winnie the Pooh*, but apparently the only full-length mystery he ever wrote was this book, *The Red House Mystery*. So that's why I read it. *What? The guy who wrote* Winnie the Pooh *wrote a mystery novel? I want to read it! I want to read it!*—that was pretty much my train of thought. There are probably people who would say that I'm not a real appreciator of literature if they saw me like that, but I don't particularly like having my eating habits, let alone my reading habits, criticized by other people.

"I'm sure they're right though, I'm pretty indiscriminate in my choice of books. Kanbaru, what mood you configure your bookshelves to is what

[41] This expression is usually written 合縁奇縁 (*aien kien*). Here, the kanji 縁 has been replaced with 猿 ("monkey") which is usually pronounced さる (*saru*) but in this case has an indicated alternate reading of えん (*en*) to make the expression work.

one may call your prerogative, but a selection from such an eccentric direction is not something I can very well approve of. *The Red House Mystery*?"

I haven't read it yet—said Senjougahara-senpai as she appeared to trace back her memories. She is a person who can look like a god no matter what pose she takes—I'm jealous.

"But, well, I think I just might have heard the plot somewhere. Ah, oh no! If I recall any more, I might remember the main plot twist."

It seems that somewhere along the way she had heard the plot of the story up to a crucial point. I suppose that's just the fate of old classics. Let's say it's hard to avoid spoilers in this day and age.

"On the other hand, I have no idea about the plot of *Winnie the Pooh*. Let me see… Was it something like Pooh is actually a doll?"

"That was the premise from the beginning, Senjougahara-senpai."

"Oh, is that so."

Her range of expressions had become much wider recently and now there were some faces she would only show me, but she would still act all displeased when someone pointed out her mistakes. That was one thing that hadn't changed about Senjougahara-senpai since middle school.

"I wonder which one came first?"

"Hmm?"

"I wonder whether Milne wrote *The Red House Mystery* or *Winnie the Pooh* first."

"I think *Winnie the Pooh* came after."

"Hmm. Somehow I always had the impression that *The Red House Mystery* came first… but I don't mean he didn't make it big writing mystery novels so he switched over to children's books or something."

"Hmm. I don't know much about Milne, but apparently he was the type of author who didn't like writing the things that people wanted."

I suppose that wording would be my usual not-quite-correct spin on it, but even without considering my natural tendency to be somewhat impolite, the foreword of *The Red House Mystery* certainly gave off that impression.

"In the beginning he made a name for himself as a humor playwright, but when people started wanting him to write those sorts of works, he started writing murder mystery novels, and when those started becoming popular, in other words when people started wanting him to write them, for some reason he started writing *Winnie the Pooh*."

"You could say he was the type of author who didn't want to be stuck with a specific label, but I can sympathize with the feeling as a human of not wanting to do something because someone else wants you to."

A bit of Senjougahara's character from before her rebirth was coming back, and you could just take that as a cute sort of humanness, hearing a high school girl saying that. But there would be quite a few troubled people if a popular author were to say that (their editor, or in Milne's case his agent).

"But out of all the people in the writing industry, there has to be a certain number of them who can't work under someone else's requests. You could say they're artists exactly because of that."

It's quite a difficult position. If you let a genius run wild it wouldn't produce a very entertaining piece of work, so in the end some amount of restrictions is needed, but in my personal opinion as an individual not gifted with artistic genius, trying to impose control as opposed to restrictions upon the inborn nature of an artist wouldn't allow them to create anything you could call "entertainment", either. You'd just end up with something completely ridiculous. Milne wrote this in his foreword: "I could take pride in even a trite and bland phone book if I wrote it with passion, but I would find it against my conscience to write even a refined blank verse tragedy if I did so under someone else's command." I'm the type of person who enjoys obeying the commands of those I respect, so to be honest I don't understand this sort of artistic sense very well. I would say fulfilling people's expectations is the greatest joy, but if I were Milne, the famous *Winnie the Pooh* would never have been written… But considering the possibility that more masterpieces of mystery fiction might have followed *The Red House Mystery*, I would say that no matter how it turned out, it would simply be a matter of taste.

"But in the end, don't you think there's a nice balance to it? The fight between the publishers and readers who want the authors to write works that they enjoy, and the rebellious authors. Did you know, the thing that troubles authors the most is when people ask them to write however they like."

"I can understand that… Sort of."

Even outside of basketball, it isn't quite as interesting without that bit of strategy when people tell you to just do whatever you want. That said, if an author just continued to write whatever the readers wanted, there's no guarantee that the readers would always respond how the author wanted. Being told to just do whatever you want can be quite troubling, but that certainly doesn't mean that doing whatever someone else wants will be easy.

"In the end, the happiest outcome would be for the authors to write whatever they want and the readers to read whatever they want but… Wait. I wonder if this would just be approving of your wild style of choosing books."

That would be quite troubling—Senjougahara-senpai said.

"Now that you mention it," she said with a clap of her hands.

"I had a conversation like this with Araragi-kun a while ago. Something about how we read books. Oh that silly Araragi-kun,[42] do you know what he said?"

I was a bit annoyed at the sound of my senior I respected so much speaking like some character out of a movie, but since I had gotten interested, I listened just like that.

"'In this day and age, I would say just reading paper books itself is already pretty good, and I'm sure any author would be happy to see that too.' Well, that's true."

Indeed. Indeed, and realizing that being praised by Araragi-senpai wasn't something that happened all the time, I was so happy I lost control of myself for a moment with all my emotions pouring in at once, and I said

[42] Hitagi refers to Koyomi in a very endearing but old-fashioned and almost melodramatic way here.

"… That's Araragi-senpai for you."

YOTSUGI FUTURE

Onimonogatari BD/DVD vol. 2
28 May 2014

Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

A doll, like the shell of an evil spirit.
An expressionless ornament.

Translation: Haremless

"*Momo* by Michael Ende."

"Don't push yourself Ononoki-chan!"

"Shouted some devilish-looking boy whose name I don't even know with all his might."

"What do you mean you don't know my name. I'm Araragi Koyomi. You totally know me. And don't say stuff like 'said so and so', I thought you wanted to leave that past behind you."

"Come on, we've already got a lot of these short stories so I have to try to change up the style a bit. Change is important, you know."

"You're an aberration and you're saying that?"

"Shinobu and Mayoi already broke the rule that aberrations can't be the narrator, so at least I want to follow it."

"Why get serious about the rules only there? You should show right here, now, the rule that there are more exceptions to the rules. Also don't call Shinobu and Hachikuji just 'Shinobu' and 'Mayoi'."

"Ah, who cares about all that. On that note, let me hear about it until the conclusion, that famous piece of children's literature."

"I told you not to push yourself, seriously, it's too much for me to talk to you about *Momo*. Remember, wasn't *Momo* one of those? One of the two most famous books that a lot of kids read when they're little, but they get traumatized from it because they can't understand what it's about."

"That's not a very nice way to put it. By the way, what was the other one?"

"*The Little Prince*."

"I see. I get the feeling that's more of your own experiences than an actual statistic, oni-no-onii-chan."

"It's not just *Momo* and *The Little Prince*, a lot of kids have people tell them to read famous books that are too sensitive or mature for them when they're little, and they feel frustrated because they think they 'have bad taste' and stop reading books while they're still young."

"I guess that just means that books each have a right age to read them at."

"Yeah. People like Hanekawa are the exception I guess, but honestly I'm not confident that I'm even at the right age to read *Momo* or *The Little Prince* yet."

"Unlike me."

"It's just like you. Ononoki-chan, whether you can even read is something I find doubtful."

"And that doubt would be spot-on."

"You can't read?"

"That's how my character is supposed to be now."

"Your character changes too much! At least get that straight. You've got way too much freedom as a character."

"It's fine, I got onee-chan to read it to me so I know what it's about. Sometimes you get a better understanding of a story from listening to it instead of reading it."

"What are you getting Kagenui-san to do for you? That person, isn't she your master? … But maybe if one gets to her level, they'd understand *Momo*."

"Oni-no-onii-chan, don't try to be so modest, I'm pretty sure it wouldn't be too hard for you to read now. Couldn't you actually have fun reading it?"

"Well you can say that because you've already read it… But it's not like I've never read it, I read it and I gave up… I'm a bit hesitant about trying it a second time."

"Just remember that the main character Momo is a little girl whose age is off-limits and I'm sure you'll enjoy it, oni-no-onii-chan."

"Listen now, never tell me 'I'm sure you'll enjoy it if you just think of her as a little girl' again. Even if I don't get the book, I'm not so low that I would look at a great piece of literature like that."

"That doesn't sound like something someone who got all worked up by Marilla reading *Anne of Green Gables* would say."

"How did you know that!"

"Still, I guess you have a point, oni-no-onii-chan. It might not be the case for *Momo*, but children in children's literature are all really children from an adult's point of view, the same way how the adults that children talk about are all adults from a child's point of view. Maybe the reason children have trouble reading *Momo* or *The Little Prince* is because they know that they aren't Momo or the Little Prince."

"That might be the case… yeah. But what was *Momo* about again? I at least remember something about a mystery that comes up. What else was there, time thieves or something?"

"The Men in Grey from the Timesavings Bank. I would say that having read it, as a dead body for whom time is meaningless, I can empathize more with the Men in Grey than the people getting their time stolen."

"Don't say 'having read it', Kagenui-san was the person who read it."

"In it, there was a line like this: 'If people knew what death was, they would stop being afraid of it.' If you really think about what time is, ultimately it's just slowly going toward death. That's why everyone values

time so much. But if you ask me, as someone who's already dead, it all seems so stupid. Oni-no-oni-chan,[43] what about you?"

"Don't call me a devil twice, how much of a devil do you think I am? Either 'oni-no-onii-chan' or 'oni-chan', pick one. Actually, don't call me either of those."

"You want me to just call you 'onii-chan'? You pervert…"

"I never said that. So you're saying that all the future holds is death? That seems a bit too pessimistic for me, though I am following you so far. I know *Momo* was by no means a very cheerful book, but it wasn't that dark, was it?"

"That's right, but it's not about treasuring your time either. I was actually expecting the book to be about that when I heard the phrase 'Time Thief', but it turned out to almost encourage you to waste your time. When you think of it like that, instead of a children's book, I figured it was more like a book written by an adult for adults who had their time stolen from them. So, it makes sense why adults would recommend it to children. They're telling them to read this book and not make the same mistakes."

"I don't really agree with recommending a book for that kind of a reason… Don't you think that reading is more about empathizing with the characters than learning some lesson?"

"I wonder. You sound sort of like Kaiki-onii-chan when you start talking about lessons. That's just what I think. When you read or see or hear a story and you feel moved by it, when you feel excited by it, that means that it's a story that you wouldn't normally experience, a story that you wouldn't find near you. The more you're moved by a story, the more you realize that it's not something that could exist in the real world. When you think of it that way, reading books is something to think about, huh. They are a waste of time."

---

[43] Yotsugi usually calls him 鬼のお兄ちゃん (*oni no onii-chan*) where the first *oni* means "devil" and the second means "big brother". Here, she uses 鬼の鬼ちゃん (*oni no oni-chan*), where the second *oni* is another "devil".

"Don't mess with me. Don't read *Momo* and take that kind of feeling away from it."

"But that waste of time is exactly what makes it seem beautiful."

"Don't think that just by saying 'but' you managed to change your image at all."

"By the way, I don't have a cool line or a dashing look anymore, so how should I finish up this story?"

"You never had a dashing look in the first place."

"Even if something good happens, I'll look unconcerned. Your hosts were Ononoki Yotsugi…"

"… and Araragi Koyomi—wait, don't end it like it's an audio commentary!"

OUGI TRAVEL

ONIMONOGATARI BD/DVD VOL. 2
28 May 2014

MIJIKANAMONOGATARI
11 September 2024

We don't know what lies ahead.[44]
But still
I'd say "no" is the best answer.

TRANSLATION: TARABLE TRANSLATIONS

I'm sure you've read Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*, haven't you? Although today's society, filled with all sorts of fun and recreation to be found outside of books, has slowly but surely drifted away from literature, there are still certain classics that everyone should read. I think that *Around the World in Eighty Days* is inarguably one of those classics. Don't you agree, Hanekawa-senpai?

"I do… But I find it hard to believe that you honestly think that, Ougi-chan," Hanekawa-senpai answers, looking irritated by my friendly inquiry.

Hanekawa-senpai is friendly toward everyone and always has a smile on her face, yet somehow she never seems to show me that angelic smile of hers. It's quite disheartening. *Sob*.

"What do you mean, '*sob*'…? *You're* the one who's always smiling."

---

[44] A play on the phrase 一寸先は闇 (*issun saki wa yami,* "even a inch ahead is darkness"), which means that no one knows what the future holds. Here, 闇 (*yami,* "darkness") is replaced with 私 (*watashi*, "me"). The overall meaning is that because the future is uncertain, you should just say "no" or do nothing.

"Oh, that's true."

I wouldn't call it angelic, though.

Still, I'm often told that I have a lovely smile.

"I know that you have plans to travel the world after graduating… So how about it? At what age did you finish reading *Around the World in Eighty Days*? I'm certain that Hanekawa-senpai, the person Araragi-senpai admires so much, has already read such a prestigious work. If you tell me that you haven't read it, I'll be thoroughly dejected. Even more dejected than the time I bought a book based on its title, only to find that the title was actually the editor's idea."

Of course, that's often the case with books.

At any rate, the truth is that there's an infinite number of classics out there, enough that a person couldn't hope to read all of them within their own lifetime. If Hanekawa-senpai hadn't read Jules Verne's novel yet, it wouldn't be particularly surprising.

"I've read it. I think I finished it when I was in second grade."

But, well. You know how this person is.

As a hedge between keeps antipathy green, out of courtesy, I offered, "You know everything, Hanekawa-senpai." But as expected, she didn't respond with her usual catchphrase. It would seem she truly isn't fond of me. Well, I suppose my goal here isn't to endear myself to Hanekawa-senpai, so—with a heavy heart—I must simply press on with the conversation.

"What were your impressions? Either at the time, or looking back on it now."

"My impressions…? It was an enjoyable read, I suppose," Hanekawa-senpai answers, looking wary.

Oh dear, you don't have to be so guarded. Right now, I'm just trying to have a light-hearted book discussion. It's not like I'm planning to lure you into some sort of trap.

"Hmm, how to put it? I remember the fact that he went through Japan on his trip around the world made me really happy. Now I'm steering the conversation away from *Around the World in Eighty Days* specifically, but

whenever Japan is mentioned in an old foreign classic, it's a bit of a shock. I know it should be obvious, but it really drives home that Japan was actually around hundreds and thousands of years ago."

"Oh?"

That's a rather peculiar view. It doesn't appear to be as simple as feeling happy to stumble across a familiar name in a foreign land… As an avid consumer of all sorts of stories, I'd like to delve a little further into this.

"Do you mean to say that it's objective proof of Japan's existence, like an endorsement from a guarantor? And thus, upon catching a glimpse of the foreign perspective of Japan through printed media, you felt a sense of relief…"

"No, no, I was only in second grade, so of course I didn't have such complex thoughts about it… It's closer to the feeling of reading a story you thought was fiction, only to suddenly find out that it's actually non-fiction, or that it was based on real events or people. … Though, I suppose someone whose whole existence feels like it belongs in fiction wouldn't really understand that."

"Oh my, that was harsh… Well, I'm a rather shallow reader, so I simply enjoyed the heart-pounding romanticism of a handsome British man traveling the world, while elegantly evading all the perils that face him."

"… Can you even comprehend the concept of romanticism?"

"Come now, Hanekawa-senpai. To say that my true identity is romanticism itself would be an absolute exaggeration."

"So it *would* be an exaggeration…"

"But considering how you're planning to go location scouting soon, I suppose that traveling the world is no longer in the realm of romanticism, but a simple reality for you. Before long, I'm sure fictional stories won't be enough to satisfy you… You could say that it's *Throw Away Your Books, Rally in the Streets* in practice."[45]

[45] A Japanese experimental drama film from 1971 that follows a young man's disillusionment with the world around him and his determination to achieve something in life while his family members are content with their poor social and economic standing.

"Hmm… I'm not sure about that."

"? What is it? You appear to have objections. Do you mean to disregard the opinion of someone whose uncle is a traveler—or rather, a wanderer—as not worth listening to?"

"Do you really have to put it like that…?" Hanekawa-senpai mutters, shrugging her shoulders in frustration. "Your uncle travels all over the country as part of his work… But I hardly think that means he threw away his books. In fact, doesn't he travel around to collect stories?"

I see, that's sensible logic. It's not like Oshino Meme is wandering from place to place in order to write up a novel… But it's also true that novels aren't the only form a story can take.

"The protagonist of *Around the World in Eighty Days*, Fogg, started out on his journey because of a bet he made with his friends. So, when you think about it, just the idea that 'a person can travel around the world' can become the basis for a full novel. In that sense, traveling could be considered a way of looking for stories, as well as a way of creating them."

"Hmm. That's something I understand quite well, as someone who's lived a long life as a transfer student. It's true that no matter how many times you transfer from school to school, you never quite get used to it—just like a story that always has a continuation."

"I wonder about that," Hanekawa-senpai responds, completely distrustful of my words.

Hehehe, I suppose we really can't get along with each other. Don't worry, I'll happily see you off on your trip. Unlike the detective Fix, I don't intend to stand in the way of your journey—your story.[46] In fact, I'd prefer that you start out on it as soon as possible.

"By the way, if we consider that it was possible to travel the world in eighty days back in 1873, when *Around the World in Eighty Days* was first published, how many days do you think it would take now? If you take an

[46] Detective Fix is a character from *Around the World in Eighty Days* who continually chases after Phileas Fogg from country to country because he believes him to be the perpetrator of a bank robbery.

airplane, I believe it's possible to do it in a mere matter of days… But I suppose that would be a bit lacking in drama."

"Who knows? But no matter how many days it takes, no matter how short a trip it is, I'll always bring a couple of books with me. The books you read on a trip are the most exciting," Hanekawa-senpai says.

"Don't throw away your books, and go on a journey"—is that your intention?

Always learning, but never losing your sense of fun, hm?

I really hate that about you.

With a smile on my face, I say:

"You're such a fool."

Aria Magazine
28 June 2014

Art: Tooyama Ema
Translation:
Kizunever Scanlations

キミとなでっこ！

HAA~
I'M EXHAUS-TED
AFTER ALL THAT, JOUKA-SENSEI WAS UPSET UNTIL IT WAS TIME TO GO HOME
トボトボ…
TSUKIHI-CHAN DIDN'T WAIT AROUND, AND JUST WENT HOME
HEY.
IT LOOKS LIKE YOU WERE GIVEN A HARD TIME IN THAT LECTURE
T-THAT VOICE
!!

☆This manga was drawn by Sengoku Nadeko-sensei.
☆This is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to real people and events is purely coincidental.

TOOK YOU A WHILE TO GET HERE, LITTLE KITTEN, HONESTLY
RAN
THE ONLY GIRL WHO'D KEEP ME WAITING AROUND LIKE THIS IS YOU
どきっ
NO WAY! C-COULD IT BE THAT HOKKYOKUSEI-KUN LIKES ME ...
HE WAS WAITING FOR ME THE WHOLE TIME...
Haa
I-IT'S NOT LIKE I ASKED YOU TO WAIT FOR ME!
AND BESIDES, MOTORCYCLES ARE AGAINST SCHOOL RULES!

HA!
I WON'T LET SCHOOL RULES TIE ME DOWN.
THERE IS ONLY ONE THING THAT COULD EVER TIE ME DOWN, AND THAT IS,
A PROMISE I MADE WITH A GIRL TEN YEARS AGO
TO APOLOGISE FOR TODAY,
I'LL TAKE YOU FOR A RIDE.
WE'LL GO TO A NICE SPOT
WHAT IS IT, LITTLE KITTEN?
YOU AREN'T AFRAID, ARE YOU?
I-I'M NOT AFRAID OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT!
OKAY, I'LL GO WITH YOU! I JUST HAVE TO RIDE IT, RIGHT?

140
160
180
200
220
240
200
HA HA!
HOLD ON TIGHT, LITTLE KITTEN!
I KNOW, JEEZ!
LOOK AT THE ROAD WHEN DRIVING!
HIS BACK IS SO BIG, BUT I WONDER WHY
I REC-OGNISE THIS BACK...
.....

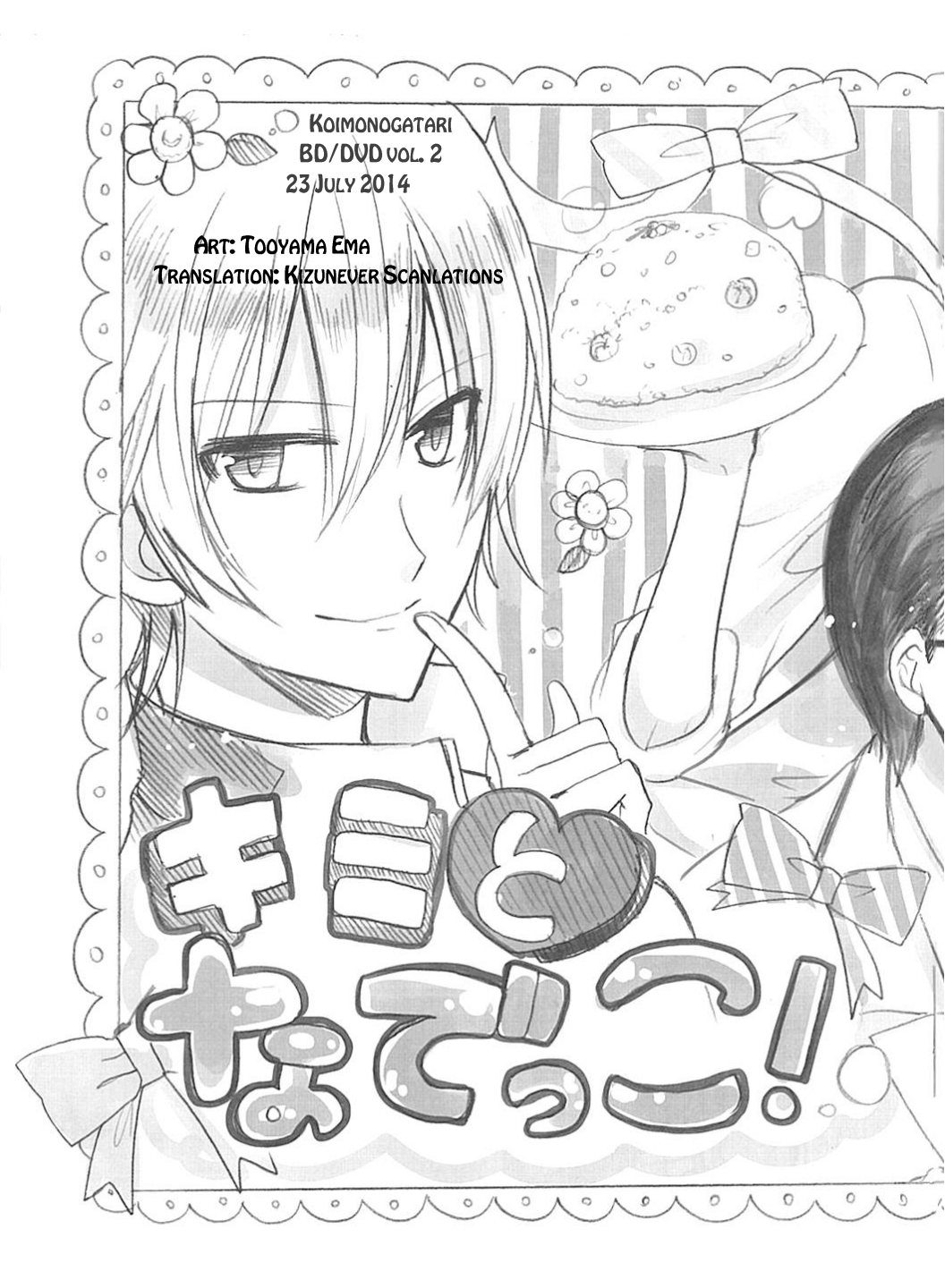
WOW! THE SEA!
IT'S SO PRETTY! IT HAS SUCH A DEEP SHADE OF BLUE!
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I LAST SAW THE SEA!
THE SEA IS SO BIG, BUT I WONDER WHY
I REC-OGNISE THIS SEA...
Brr
IT'S SO COLD...

A GIRL SHOULDN'T BE FEELING COLD.
YOU HAVE TO TAKE BETTER CARE OF YOURSELF
!
HM? WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
YOU ARE THE ONLY GIRL I HAVE INTEREST IN
... HMPH! I BET
YOU SAY THAT TO EVERYONE
Ouch ...
!
WAI-WH-WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?
Kyan!

DO KYUN
HONESTLY, WHAT A HELPLESS PRINCESS
ヒュー
CAN'T BE LEFT ALONE WITHOUT AN ESCORT!
S-STOP, I'M NOT A LITTLE KID
カァァァ
WHAT IF SOMEONE SEES US?
HAHA! THERE'S NO NEED TO BE COY, WE'LL SHARE OUR HAPPINESS WITH EVERYONE
I'M NOT BEING COY! IT'S JUST EMBARRASING!

THANK YOU FOR ESCORTING ME
BUT I WON'T FORGIVE YOU, HOKKYO-KUSEI -KUN
BUT, IT'S STRANGE, I DON'T UNDER-STAND
I DON'T MIND BEING LIKE THIS
...? WELL, SEE YOU TOMOR-ROW
RAN-KUN
RAN IS FINE
THAT'S WHAT YOU CALLED ME WHEN WE WERE KIDS
OH NO!
I FORGOT TO RETURN HIS JACKET
HOW DID HE KNOW WHERE MY HOUSE WAS?
HUH? COME TO THINK OF IT, EVEN THOUGH I DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING

HUH? THERE'S A PHOTO INSIDE
I WONDER WHO IT IS...
!
HIS TRAIN PASS IS INSIDE
IF HE DOESN'T HAVE THIS BEFORE SCHOOL TOMOR-ROW...
THIS IS ME FROM WHEN I WAS A KID!?
WHAT IS HAPPEN-ING!?
to be continued!


Koimonogatari
BD/DVD vol. 2
23 July 2014
Art: Tooyama Ema
Translation: Kizunever Scanlations
+α
なでっこ!

HAA~
I'M SO TIRED.
I ENDED UP COMING HOME SO LATE...
IT'S A GOOD THING NO ONE ELSE IS HOME... BUT IT'S LONELY BEING BY MYSELF.
I KEPT BEGGING TSUKIHI-CHAN TO STAY OVER, BUT SHE TURNED ME DOWN
HEY
YOU'RE BACK HOME RATHER LATE.
TH-THAT VOICE...
!!

どっき
NO WAY! COULD IT BE THAT SUI-KUN...
...WAS WAITING FOR ME THIS WHOLE TIME?
WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING OUT SO LATE, NADEKO-NEE?
I'LL BE TELLING YOUR MOTHER ABOUT THIS!
I... I DIDN'T DO ANY-THING MUCH, OKAY?!
SUI-KUN, YOU MIGHT BE MY CHILDHOOD FRIEND, BUT...
JUST BECAUSE MY MOTHER ASKED YOU TO DO THIS DOESN'T MEAN YOU CAN DO WHATEVER YOU WANT!

IT'S FINE.
JUST TELL ME THE TRUTH.

S-SUI-KUN
OH DEAR... THIS IS SCARY, BUT...

JUST WHEN DID HE GET TALLER THAN ME...?
S-SORRY
JOUKA-SENSEI WAS TELLING ME OFF AND BEFORE I KNEW IT...

ニコッ
OH, IS THAT ALL? I WAS WORRIED
THOUGHT YOU WERE ABDUCTED BY THAT TRANSFER STUDENT.
GUESS THERE WAS NOTHING TO GET HUNG UP OVER!
カァ…
HE WAS WORRIED ABOUT ME...
もじもじ
I-
IT'S NOT LIKE I ASKED YOU TO GET WORRIED OVER ME...
I'M FINE WITH WORRYING ABOUT YOU
I LIKE DOING IT, AFTER ALL.
ピキィ!
なでこ

L-LIKE...
きゅぴーん
HEY NOW, HE DOESN'T MEAN IT THAT WAY
SUI-KUN'S BEEN MY FRIEND SINCE WE WERE LITTLE, SO HE'S LIKE A LITTLE BROTHER TO ME.
BUT... I WONDER WHY. EVEN THOUGH IT'S SUI-KUN ...
...MY HEART IS BEATING SO FAST.
DOKI...
DOKI...

SUI-KUN CAN COOK...
EVEN THOUGH WE'VE BEEN TOGETHER FOR TEN YEARS, I HAD NO IDEA...

ジャジャーン
OH, WOW! AMAZING!
THANKS FOR THE MEAL!
I THOUGHT I KNEW EVERY-THING ABOUT SUI-KUN.
BUT I ONLY KNOW WHAT I KNOW...
SO YUMMY!
SUI-KUN, WHAT'S THIS DISH CALLED?
OHH? I DON'T KNOW
I JUST SLAPPED SOMETHING TOGETHER
もぐもぐ
THIS SURE BRINGS BACK MEMORIES!
YOU USED TO DO THIS WHENEVER WE PLAYED HOUSE TOGETHER.
OH! BUT I GUESS YOU DON'T REMEMBER, SUI-KUN ...?
...NO, I REMEM-BER.
IS SHE TALKING ABOUT KINDER-GARTEN?

HUH ...?
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, SUI-KUN ...?
I NEVER INTENDED TO PLAY HOUSE.
DO YOU EXPECT ME TO BE YOUR LITTLE BROTHER FOREVER?
YOU SHOULD REALISE HOW CUTE YOU ARE!
S-SUI-KUN.
STOP... TH-THAT HURTS...
...THEN YOU CAN'T COMPLAIN ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU, RIGHT?
IF YOU CAN SO BLITHELY MAKE A FAMILY WITH A GUY...

ぱたぱた
Y-YES!
I'M COMING!
ピンポーン
ガチャ
WHEW... I'M SAVED ...
I'M SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING. WHO MIGHT YOU BE?
DAMN... WHAT AM I DOING?
I WANT TO TREAT NADEKO-NEE WELL.
BUT I KEEP BLOWING IT...
J-
JOUKA-SENSEI?!

GOOD EVENING, SENGOKU-SAN.
I FELT THAT I HADN'T LECTURED YOU ENOUGH, SO I CAME BY FOR A HOME VISIT.
A-A HOME VISIT, YOU SAY ...?!
BUT MOM AND DAD AREN'T HERE ...
AND SUI-KUN'S HERE!
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?!
to be continued

SURUGA NEAT

Yomiuri Shimbun
16 August 2014
Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Good medicine tastes bitter[47]
Good poison is even more painful
Lets make the flowers bloom in the future.
A young maiden and an evil spirit double team[48]

Translation: Ryoukugan

"Have you heard of Mary Hastings Bradley's *Alice in Jungleland*, my beloved daughter, Kanbaru Suruga-chan?"

"I doubt you have", my awful mother, Kanbaru Tooe-san, continued with a malicious, smirking laugh. Of course, although I unfortunately didn't know anything about that book, not being very well read, what I wanted to know is why she, who should have passed away long ago in a traffic accident, now seemed to have come back to mock me like this.

Well, I suppose this *is* a dream.

That we can't choose the dreams we have might be the greatest flaw of the creatures known as humans—is that something like how a child can't choose the parents they're born to?

---

[47] A saying meaning that the hard, bitter truth is the best medicine.

[48] 二輪挿し (*nirinzashi*) means penetration of one hole with two objects which relates to Suruga's affinity for BL.

"… I wonder, is *Alice in Jungleland* a variation on Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*? I was sure that that book had a sequel called *Through the Looking Glass*…"[49]

"No, no, that's why I said that the author of *Alice in Jungleland* was Mary Hastings Bradley—she was an American author and an explorer at the same time. It's a record of when she went on an adventure with her family into the interior of Africa."

"I see. So it's a true story?"

"Yes, but although I say it's a true story, since it was written nearly a century ago, naturally you'll feel a bit of the period coming through in its depictions. The title is *Alice in Jungleland* because Bradley's six-year-old daughter who came with them was named Alice, and the book is written from her point of view."

"Oh…"

I couldn't give a clear answer because I've never read anything by Mary Hastings Bradley, much less her daughter, so I really don't have much interest in either of them. Still, my mother is quite the eccentric. She should have just brought up Lewis Carroll.

"Hahaha. No, no, when I was a girl, Lewis Carroll was my favorite thing to read. I read *The Hunting of the Snark*[50] so many times!"

"Why *The Hunting of the Snark*? I'd expect *Alice in Wonderland* to be first."

"I read *Alice in Wonderland* quite a few times, too. Although, the one I read was *Alice Monogatari*, which was translated in collaboration by Akutagawa Ryuunosuke and Kikuchi Kan."[51]

---

[49] The Japanese titles literally translate to *Alice of the Jungle Country*, *Alice of the Strange Country*, and *Alice of the Mirror Country* respectively, which explains a bit more of Suruga's confusion.

[50] *The Hunting of the Snark* is a nonsense poem published by Lewis Carroll in 1876, five years after *Through the Looking Glass.*

[51] Akutagawa Ryuunosuke (1892-1927) was a famous short story author, best known in the West for his 1915 short story, 羅生門 (*Rashoumon*). Kikuchi Kan (1888-1948) was the pen name of Kikuchi Hiroshi (written using the same

"Please read *Alice in Wonderland* normally…"

At least read *The Nursery "Alice"*.[52]

I read *The Red House Mystery* just because it was the only mystery written by the author of *Winnie the Pooh*, and while substance is important, even I'm drawn to the events surrounding this book. I don't plan on insisting that I'm a serious reader myself, but to hear the story like this leads me to believe that, without a doubt, it's because of my mother's influence that I read it—after all, don't they say that children grow up watching their parents' backs?

"Humph. Children watch their parents' backs… In other words, parents turn their backs on their children—if that's the case, Suruga, in order to get your interest, I'll disclose some valuable information. I was surprised to find this out later myself, but the Alice whose point of view this story is told from, the six-year-old girl who's shown riding on the back of a baby elephant at the beginning of the book, went on to become James Tiptree Jr,[53] the giant of the sci-fi novel world who wrote *The Only Neat Thing to Do*."

"J-Junior!?"

No.

I shouldn't be focusing on the "junior".

James Tiptree Jr. Naturally, even I know her—she's an author whose books I've read. Instead, I want to know if there's anyone who hasn't read her books. *The Only Neat Thing to Do* was a book Senjougahara-senpai and I were quite fond of in middle school.

---

kanji, 菊池 寛), a well-known author and playwright who focused his stories on the hardships and daily lives of common people.

[52] *The Nursery "Alice"* is a shortened and revised version of *Alice in Wonderland* written by Lewis Carroll in 1890 for children under the age of five.

[53] James Tiptree Jr (1915-1987) is the pen name of science fiction author Alice Bradley Sheldon (née Hastings Bradley), daughter of Mary Hastings Bradley. To avoid confusion, I'm using female pronouns to refer to her while talking about Tiptree even though James is a male name, since Sheldon herself was a woman.

"Ha, in any case, people like you probably read it because it was a temporary title for the series finale of *Neon Genesis Evangelion*."

"You're right but, if you say that, doesn't it mean that you only read *Alice in Jungleland* because James Tiptree Jr appears in it as a child? Why say 'I was surprised to find out later'? Please stop lying."

"Incidentally, I've read the version of *The Only Neat Thing to Do* that was illustrated by Kawahara Yumiko.[54] Aren't you jealous?"

Even though you're innocently bragging…

That might just be a difference of the times.

"So that means that both mother and daughter were authors, huh? In fact, wasn't it kept a secret for a long time that James Tiptree Jr was a woman?"

"Yes. Well, sometimes choosing the same career as your mother leads to conflict. How much do you know, Suruga, about Tiptree's heroic life as an author?"

"To an extent, but I couldn't give details."

The fact that she was having adventures in Africa at the age of six already seems too amazing to call it just an anecdote, but even without knowing that, the story of James Tiptree Jr's life is breathtaking. My mother said her "life as an author", but I think it would be more accurate to say her life in general. She was the kind of author an eccentric reader like myself, interested not only in an author's books, but also the little anecdotes regarding their life, couldn't talk about without going on and on. Specifically, as far as her death goes, it'd be best to quietly keep my mouth shut.[55]

---

[54] Kawahara Yumiko (1960-?) is a shoujo manga artist best known for her *Dolls* (観用少女, *Kan You Shoujo*) series.

[55] On May 19, 1987 Sheldon (Tiptree) committed suicide. She had been suffering from health issues caused by a lifetime of smoking and her husband was nearly blind, invalid, and no longer able to care for himself. She shot and killed her husband in his sleep before turning the gun on herself.

"But, it feels odd. No, if you say it's natural then it's natural, but… Well… Even the great authors in science fiction history, and, well, literary history, were children once, and they had parents, too."

Everyone was a child once.

And everyone is someone's child.

Never mind being "natural", it's life's major premise—but, if it's unexpected, you're liable to lose sight of it, like something totally ordinary. So, it's a story that's not just limited to "great authors".

Oneself—myself.

I don't think that I can really remember what it was like when I was that young, and it's hard to say that I'm constantly focusing on whose child I am.

"What was important to you as a child becomes less and less important. The things that you used to think were amazing become ordinary clichés. Family should be everything, but becomes just another part of the world. A mother's love that envelops you like a vast sea is a narrow well—in all honesty, if that's what it means to grow up, there's something really lonely in that."

"… I don't have any memory at all of you 'enveloping me in a mother's love'…"

"That's because you've forgotten."

"…"

I wonder if that's true…

"Just like you, I was once a child too, and I also forgot the time when my parents were raising me. All I remember is the books I read."

"*The Hunting of the Snark*?"

"Among others. Which books you've read and at what age, it's very important, don't you think? With people and with books, in the end, the timing of your encounter is everything."

"… But there are times when we forget the books that we've read."

I didn't like the feeling of her lecturing me without saying anything back, so as a token effort, I made a rebuttal—although, it is the truth in its own way. Indiscriminate readers like Senjougahara-senpai and I, who read

books like drinking water, completely forget the books we read a long time ago, and end up reading the same ones two or even three times.

"It's fine if that's the case, isn't it? While the things that were important to you as a child might become less important—those books that you used to think were neither good nor bad might become interesting when you've grown up."

"I wonder. That might be true, but I wonder if that means that I've matured as a reader."

I guess if you say that the timing of the encounter is important, it will be. Then, my mother shrugged her shoulders.

"Well, perhaps, the books might be the ones maturing—in this case, maybe it should be 'aging' rather than 'maturing'."

"Aging…?"

"The radical travel diary written one hundred years ago, as a result of the author's daughter becoming a great author afterwards, now shines in a different light. You need to follow that example, too. It might be *The Only Neat Thing to Do* for you."

In short.

My mother, Kanbaru Tooe, laughed with a grin and said,

"If you can't be medicine, be poison. Otherwise, you're just plain water."

The Hobonichi Techo of Araragi Koyomi, Hanekawa Tsubasa, and Sengoku Nadeko

Hobonichi Techo 2015
Official Guide Book
26 August 2014

Translation: Sway Translations

28TH OF JULY FRI

209

IN OLD CALENDAR: 4TH OF JULY

228 DAYS LEFT!

(IN CHARGE: SENJOUGAHARA)

☆ DONUTS

6

MATH

9

JAPANESE

12

SCIENCE

15

SOCIAL

18

ENGLISH

21

0

3

PLANS FOR AUGUST

8/1 ~ 8/3

8/15 ~ 8/20

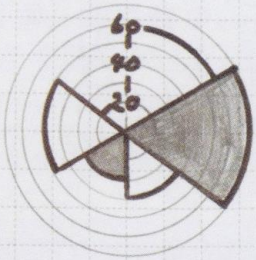
8/21 ~

{CHANCES OF ACHIEVING IT 90%}

Proposition: I keep on making the same errors. I'm starting to hate it. Should I take a break from math for the time being and focus on other subjects? I'm doing good in world history. I only need to continue at the same pace.

You keep making the same errors because you are a fool. The first one is due to ignorance, the ones starting from the second one are due to foolery. I recommend heavily reflecting. For math, don't get too cocky. For world history, well, you got a point.

I guess it's called "being focused on not focusing on anything."
"Look at it, I'm milling it pretty softly, huh?" I don't want to mill that way.
I move my feelings to my left hand in the most natural way possible. Holding it until the shape is set, as casually as possible, facing the lathe.
- From Kashiwagi Madoka-san's *Ho 10*



12

Thoughts on the translated book "Chuubaika"
A book that follows the stories of several individuals and explores friendships between shy men and women. The author has a unique way of tying together the quirks of each character. It's not anyone in particular, but it feels like I'm reading a story about someone I know. I can really feel the era from the objects that appear in the story. And not just the old fashioned objects; the language gives it a really natural vintage feel, too. Maybe it's the same for dark, supernatural stories. The title for the Japanese-version, Chuubaika, means an insect-pollinated flower, and it's fascinating to think about which character in the book is the flower, and which is the insect. Am I a flower to someone I know? Am I an insect? And can I become someone's flower?

— Hirokazu Tanaka
advertising agency employee
"A Summer of Studying, a Summer of Games"

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

8 9 Wed 221

In old calendar: 16th of July

KIMI TO NADEKKO

CHAPTER 4

1. Summary
2. [COVER]
3. [COVER]
4. Sui-kun VS Jouka-sensei
5. Cooking Showdown
6. Sui-kun Cooking
7. Eating ○ Yummy ○
8. Sensei Cooking
9. Eating ○ Awful ○
10. Ran-kun's entrance
11. What should I do geez~

To be continued

NEW CHARACTER
NANKYOKUSEI
AYUMU
RAN-KUN'S RIVAL

There are times where I get an idea for a drawing but I mustn't act on it immediately.
I take a pause to think "no that's not it," "that should be like that," "what should that be?"
Since the ideas come out after a pause... I must apparently decide things logically.
And as I am thinking about all of that, the second wave of inspiration arrives.
-From Tanadori Yokoo's *Tanadori Yokoo's End Years Production Method Great Reveal!*

ROUKA GOD

Heroine Book 6: Kanbaru Suruga
18 September 2014
Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Translation: Haremless

The reason I decided to purge the Swamp God, as you may all have guessed, was that it was interfering with my wholesome and sound business ventures. What a despicable god, destroying without a second thought all the sincere and faithful hard work I had been humbly doing in good conscience over the years as a productive member of society. I had no choice but to proactively engage in some defensive measures against the Swamp God in order to protect my rights. Of course, that sincerity and faith was in money, and the rights I was protecting were my rights to deception. And of course, none of this was done on my nonexistent good conscience. Though none of this changes the fact that claiming so in my good conscience is perfectly within my sincere and faithful rights.

But no, even if that weren't the case, even if it were wrong or just a lie, if the web of lies that were the charms I had been spreading with all my might, my storm of baseless rumors, had all completely disappeared, I would have to step forward, regardless of gain or loss.

"Don't worry about it", "Just leave it be", "Pretend you don't know anything about it", "What will be will be", "Forget about it", "It's not like you're going to die or something"

… The Swamp God had used these words to render my charms useless, so I had something to say back to her.

"Hey there, Kaiki-san."

The Swamp God said as she welcomed me. Surprisingly enough, although you could hardly say she was very serious about it, the person revered as a god and who bathed in the adoration of all the middle school students in the area was a kid with bleached brown hair wearing sweatpants. Her bleached hair seemed more like a way to torment her body rather than a fashion-conscious decision about her appearance.[56]

"? How do you know my name. I don't remember knowing any kids as rotten as you."

"Hahaha, you see, I've been having lots of talks with the kids who've been getting involved with you, Kaiki Deishuu-san. 'Kai' like a heap of shells and 'ki' like a dead tree. Deishuu like '*dorobune*', a boat stuck in the mud. I always thought they were just exaggerating when they said you were like bad luck grew a pair of arms and legs. Seems pretty spot-on to me."

The Swamp God said with a little chuckle, then took a pack of gum out of the pockets of her sweatpants. Then, still with that frivolous smirk on her face but a sharp tone, she said, not taking a single step back,

"You must be a pretty horrible adult, tricking kids like that."

"What we're doing is practically the same. Although unlike me, you might say that you're tricking people but only an idiot would fall for your tricks."

"I'm just throwing stuff against the wall and seeing what sticks, still ironing out the kinks, you know? I didn't grow up tricking people or getting conned myself so I'm still a beginner. I know you're a pro and all so give me a break if I'm not exactly a master con artist yet. I'm really sorry

[56] Bleached hair used to be, and still is, a sort of youthful and rebellious hairstyle in Japan.

if my little child's play is getting in the way of your con scheme. I really am."

I've never heard less sincere words. And that's coming from someone without a speck of a conscience. On a whim or maybe because I was getting a bit annoyed, I decided to flatter the kid a little.

"Don't be so humble, you're actually not bad. You even managed to weed out all the rumors I've been spreading around. I learned a thing or two I might use in the future."

I had said that on a whim to have her think I was really complimenting her, but that might not actually be a bad idea. A conman's repertoire only grows by incorporating young, new ideas. But I guess an elementary school kid's would still be too young.

"I'm not in elementary school. I actually graduated middle school a while ago."

"Is that so, all you kids look the same when you get to my age."

"A lot of people tell me I'm hard to approach because I act like an adult."

"I think that just means they don't like you. I know someone quite like that."

"Hmm… Someone like that, eh? Whatever."

The Swamp God popped five pieces of gum out of the package she had been playing with in her hand all at once and threw them into her mouth. Kids these days, no manners, but I guess chewing gum is her way of getting herself fired up.

"Want one?"

"I don't like candy. I'm an adult. A grown-up. The only thing adults want is money, or promises. I'll be fine if you promise me you won't get in the way of my business anymore."

"Sure thing. Got it. I won't get in your way anymore."

On the surface, she promised me right away. But as a professional in telling lies, I've never seen a more obvious lie. It was more like she had just openly declared she hoped to maintain the status quo between us going forward into the future.

What else would it be.

From my point of view, the Swamp God's silly "life counseling" is starting to be a real problem for my business. But from her point of view, the lovely little con I've been spreading around like the plague is the only reason she can still go around doing her misfortune collection.

Our goals are completely different.

Like they say, the doctor's only in business because people get sick. Although the only way the Swamp God can treat her patients is with the placebo effect.

"Unfortunately, it appears negotiations have broken down. My only option now is to crush you so mercilessly you'll never be able to do business here again."

"You aren't very mature for an adult, are you."

She didn't flinch an inch from my threat. I suppose this is what they mean by "bending but never breaking". Or maybe she thinks I'm not serious. If so, that would be correct. Really, even I have no idea when I'm being serious. Maybe I never am.

"No need to be so forward, Kaiki Deishuu-san. Want to give my 'life counseling' a try? See what it's like to throw all of your troubles into my deep swamp."

"Throw my troubles into your deep swamp? Are you trying to act like a ghost or something?"

"'Get outta my swamp!', I guess that's more like a swamp monster.[57] Deishuu, like a boat stuck in the mud… Mud and swamp. Muddy swamp, muddy swamp."

The Swamp God laughed at her own incomprehensible joke. She really did look like she was still in elementary school when she laughed. Did she say she already graduated from middle school? Now that I think about it, she looks like she could be in high school… Actually, no she doesn't. I have

[57] She's pretending to be *Dorotabou* (泥田坊), a monster in an old folktale who would appear night after night from a rice paddy (which are very muddy at the bottom) and scream "Give me back my field!". His name literally means "Muddy Field Boy".

no reason to give her the benefit of the doubt, but even with it she looks like she's in middle school at best. I suppose looks don't count for much.

"No matter what you drop in, I can't give you back a golden axe[58] or a silver axe or something. I'm not cut out for being a goddess. All I am is a Swamp God."

"Are you offering to take my misfortune, then?"

The Swamp God listens to people's tales of their misfortune and then quietly takes them away. It doesn't accept any compensation in return, which I don't particularly agree with, but long story short, misfortune itself is what it takes as its compensation. Or so the story goes.

"Interesting."

I said, because it wasn't interesting at all.

"Alright, so hear me out. Right now I've actually got something on my mind that's really troubling me. It keeps me up all night and it's making me miserable. So just until a while ago I've been dating this girl in high school, but she found out I was only in it for the money and I've been on the lam ever since. I'm going crazy looking over my shoulder all day thinking she's going to come and stab me or something, which is why I started doing all these bad things I never wanted to. It takes the edge off my nerves, you know. What do you think I should do?"

I had just thought that story up on the spot and I realized what an unrealistic situation it was to be asking for advice about. But the Swamp God paid no attention to my painfully obvious lie.

"Don't worry about it."

She said.

"Just leave it be, pretend you don't know anything about it, what will be will be, forget about it, it's not like you're going to die or something. Got it?"

---

[58] She's referencing one of Aesop's *Fables* called *The Honest Woodman*, where a man drops his axe into a river and the god Hermes pulls a golden axe and then a silver axe out of the river, and asks the man whether they are his to test his honesty.

"… I'm sure that's what you tell everyone, but she actually told me she's going to kill me, you know?"

I was hoping to put some pressure on the Swamp God with a serious request, something a kid couldn't just brush off with some clever words. And so I told lie after lie.

"Even if I forget about it, she's never going to let me off the hook for the rest of her life."

"Not really, you're not really all that important to her. You're right that she might really want to kill you now, but eventually some nice guy is going to come along and heal the wounds you gave her."

"…"

"She's not even as hurt as you think. You'll be a memory in the past in no time. So, don't worry about it."

She had no proof for anything she was saying. All she was doing was going along with her usual plan, I could tell. She was certainly an inexperienced beginner and not exactly very eloquent in her speech, but she was still running a fine con. I was just flattering her before, but this kid could probably trick most adults too.

But not me, obviously.

I doubt there's really some "nice guy" out there who'd make a good couple with her, and "she" doesn't even exist in the first place. She doesn't exist.

That said, having seen her techniques, I couldn't just leave without showing her anything in return. I may love money, but I don't like being in debt.

"Swamp God. Since we're both here, why don't I show you some of my techniques."

"No thanks, I'm fine. I'm not interested in any charms."

"Come on, it doesn't have to be right away or anything. I'm thinking we might have a long way to go with each other in the future."

"I'm glad you think so, let's hope the both of us do well. So, what are you going to do?"

"Relax, it's nothing dangerous. I was just thinking of introducing a customer to you that I think you'd be able to help sometime not too long from now. I think you've got a lot of potential, that's all."

"A customer? You want to set up a barter agreement with me or something?"

I said nothing in reply to the Swamp God's question.

In place of a response,

"It's really something I should be doing, but I get tired of things quickly and I'm not really cut out for collection. So I'm letting you take the job, I'm trusting you with it."

I said.

"Swamp God, one day all the misfortune that's been sitting at the bottom in you is going to pile up and appear on the surface. And you'll run into some friends you forgot about. That's the lesson you should learn from meeting me. So when that time comes,"

Make sure you don't miss it.

The Swamp God had a suspicious look on her face. She was probably bracing herself not to be tricked, but in reality that was completely useless.

She had already tricked herself into thinking her life wasn't full of misfortune.

By taking in other people's misfortune.

I didn't have to do a thing to trick her.

Not to mention I have no duty to open up her eyes. But because one day I will have to take on that duty.

Swamp God.

Let me give you a devil.

SHINOBU FIGURE

Nisemonogatari Premium Item Box
21 November 2014

Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Translation: Tigoris Translates

Oshino Shinobu was someone special to me.

So special, in fact, that you could say that she was like a part of me—or rather, that I was like a part of her—but whichever way you put it, the point remains that we are two hearts beating as one, two sides of the same coin, yin and yang, bound together by a bond that could never be severed.

How did we become this way? Well, let's just take a bold leap and skip over that, but suffice to say that for me, Araragi Koyomi, that little blond-haired girl, which is to say little blond-haired vampire, was, in many ways, and in all ways, an existence that was more vital than my own heart.

Now, with that said, just because she was an existence that I could not survive without did not mean that I wanted more of her—and if you don't understand what I mean, let me explain that one day I suddenly looked over to discover that there was a second Shinobu.

They were side-by-side in the same pose.

The way that they sat in silence, staring in my direction, seemed familiar. If, instead of a hat, they each wore a helmet, and if they were

sitting in the corner of a ruined cram school classroom hugging knees to chest, then it would be a perfect recreation of the Shinobu of the past. It was a nostalgic thing to have come to mind—but it was not the time for nostalgia.

"Sh-Shinobu has multiplied…? W-What is going on…?"

"Calm down, oni-no-onii-chan. One of them is only an afterimage—or rather, one of them is a Nendoroid created by the Good Smile Company."

Chronologically speaking, it was unclear just when Ononoki-chan had come to stand beside me as if that were her natural place to be—that would be the shikigami girl Ononoki Yotsugi-chan, just to be clear—but stand beside me she did, and she spoke without expression or any inflection to her voice.

"W-Whaaaaaaaaat?! You're telling me that one of those is a Nendoroid created by the Good Smile Company?!"

It couldn't be true! No matter how I studied the two, I couldn't tell them apart.

Even as an Oshino Shinobu professional, I was unable to differentiate the real Shinobu from the figure.

No matter how I strained my eyes, I could only confirm that the two were identical.

I had heard rumors before, but these Nendoroids were truly terrifying in their accuracy.

"If such goods were available on the market, then I would have no choice but to buy them… I said with a Good Smile."

"Don't worry, oni-no-onii-chan. Oni-i-chan should be able to figure out which is the real one."

Ononoki-chan said while patting my back encouragingly. Perhaps because there was no emotion in her voice, the force behind her pat felt like it might have been an expression of anger at me repeating an old catchphrase.

"After all, to oni-no-onii-chan, the former Kissshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade, that is, Oshino Shinobu is a special loli existence, right?"[59]

"Special! What is a special loli? Don't notice the fact that 'loli' is included in 'special'. It will make it difficult to use the word 'special' from now on, won't it? How frequently used a word do you think it is? Will saying 'it doesn't matter' now become 'loli doesn't matter'? Will 'extraordinary' become 'loliordinary'?[60] What does it mean?"

I turned back to face the two Shinobus, and, as usual, they remained silent and unmoving. Hmm.

They really were portraying her character from early in the series.

Mhm, yes, they were identical—however, that meant that there was a means of approaching the problem.

After all, there have been over twenty of the short stories, so I was learning how to predict the plot.

"Kukuku…"

I chuckled unpleasantly.

This whole thing was just a big prank that was concocted by Shinobu and Ononoki-chan. Normally, a vampire and a zombie wouldn't be likely to get along, but it seemed that if the goal was to prank me, then the young girl and the tween girl could overcome their differences and work together. Unfortunately for them, they chose the wrong person to prank.

You see, the cliché that would come into play here, which is to say, the formula as dictated by the dramaturgy, would be that both of the two Shinobus would turn out to be dolls.

Once I made my choice between the two, the real Shinobu would come out from wherever she was hiding, but unfortunately for them, I was one step ahead.

---

[59] Instead of saying 特別 (*tokubetsu*, "special"), Yotsugi says 特ロリ (*tokuloli*), as the characters for "loli" (ロリ) are included in the kanji for "special" (別).

[60] Here, Koyomi transforms 別 into ロリ in the phrases 別にいいです (*betsuni ii desu*, "it doesn't matter") and 別格 (*bekkaku*, "extraordinary").

"To think that you'd buy two of the Nendoroids made by Good Smile Company just to try and fool me… But, then again, the quality is so high that I suppose anyone would be tempted to buy two."

"I think the sales pitch has gone on a bit too long, oni-no-onii-chan."

"Let's see."

I looked at each of the figures, and they looked so perfectly like the real Shinobu that I wanted to reach out and touch them because they couldn't have possibly replicated the feeling of the real Shinobu's skin.

In other words, all I had to do was touch them to instantly figure out the answer. Seriously, you've got to be kidding me. It was way too easy.

For a high school student studying for entrance exams, it was a stimulating event. I'd buy her some of her favorite donuts later as a reward for giving me something fun to do.

And so, with an easygoing manner, I stuck a hand inside the back of each of the Shinobus' one-piece dresses and…

"Uhyaa!?"

"Uhyaa!?"

I was instantly rewarded with two screams.

"Huh?"

Huh?

Can figures scream?

"What the hell are you doing! Don't grope my back!"

"What the hell are you doing! Don't grope my back!"

"Vampire punch!"

"Vampire punch!"

I then suffered two vampire punches at the same time.

The chin is one of the five critical weak points of the human body, and to be struck there with an uppercut is to suffer a dire blow with potent destructive power—so when I received two uppercuts to the chin, it was no laughing matter, and I was promptly sent flying back.

Ononoki-chan made the smallest of movements to shift herself out of my trajectory, meaning that she did not catch me—why would you move out of the way? You should be helping me here!

"Ah… what…?"

I was incredibly confused, which wasn't helped by the blow to the head—but when I looked up, both of the figures were standing in battle poses with tears in their eyes and breathing heavily as they stared daggers at me. It didn't seem that my head had been rattled so hard that I was seeing double.

Also, the two figures hadn't simply screamed. Just before the scream and the double vampire punch, I felt with both of my hands soft skin covering the hard column of vertebrae that made Shinobu's spine!

"We got you, oni-no-onii-chan. The prank that we set up this time was that they were both the real Shinobu."

"How could I have predicted that?!"

"She used her vampire power to duplicate herself."

"She can do that?!"

That vampire power is too powerful.

"Ka ka!"

"Ka ka!"

Seeing my panicked reaction must have been enough to satisfy them, because the two Shinobus finally left their fighting poses and laughed in unison.

"It's easy enough to do if you're an iron-blooded, hot-blooded, cold-blooded vampire like me."

"It's easy enough to do if you're an iron-blooded, hot-blooded, cold-blooded vampire like me."

"Th… That's amazing."

I could only be impressed.

You can slip through time, you can duplicate yourself, and you can apparently do anything with these vampire powers. You're not even a vampire anymore, if you can do all of that.

In fact, if you're capable of doing things like that, then just imagine all of the problems you could have avoided by using that power… but instead you used it to play a prank?

I can't tell if you were being stingy with your powers or if it's the opposite…

"C-Can I do it too?"

"What kind of hellscape would we be in if there were more than one oni-i-chan? Who created such an awful setting? Die."

After Ononoki-chan unleashed her verbal abuse on me (did I imagine that she told me to die at the end there?), the dual Shinobus spoke in unison again, "By the way," "By the way," changing the topic and somehow managing to have an entirely flat tone even with the stereo sound effect.

It sounded as if they were both feeling some unspeakable and unfathomable anxiety over the future that stood just before them.

"How do we go recombine into one?"

"How do we go recombine into one?"

"… So this is the punch line."

So there you have it.

This little blond girl who was so special to me became two—and it's possible that the figure that you possess is yet another of her copies who was unable to go back.

KAREN BRUSHING

Heroine Book 7: Fire Sisters
8 July 2015

Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Translation: Trauben Saft

Brushing her teeth is a girl's dedication, her daily ritual. But something becoming a habit also means that you become oblivious to changes. I, Araragi Karen, hadn't been aware of that, not until that day, that morning, and that time, when I felt it.

"Ow!"

"What is it, Karen-chan? My dear sister?"

My brother, hearing his sister's scream, came rushing into the bathroom. I pulled the toothbrush out of my mouth and explained myself.

"I-It's nothing! My back teeth don't hurt at all. I don't have a cavity. So I don't have to go to the dentist."

"So your back teeth hurt, you have a cavity and have to go to the dentist, huh…"

My brother looked at me compassionately.

To look at your sister with such sorrowful eyes…

"N-No! There's no way I'm going! We don't even know for sure whether I have a cavity yet!"

"People with cavities always deny that they have them, for some reason… Just face the reality. I mean, why is someone like you, who's brawling all the time, afraid of the dentist? Being punched in the face is a lot more painful than a cavity, right?"

My brother was right, but, but this is just not something you can rationalize.

If you don't like something you don't like it, and if you're afraid of something then you're afraid of it. Dammit, how could I get a cavity even though I brush my teeth every morning and evening? I feel like I wasted some serious time and effort.

"Is that so… Well, if you really don't want to go, then I'll respect that, as your brother."

He shrugged, giving in.

Hm? What did he mean by that?

"You might be afraid of the dentist, but you're not afraid of your brother, right? I'll examine you, so come with me." my brother said, grinning and turning his head, beckoning me.

Wow, just as I'd expect of him! So reliable!

"Okay, so undress your upper body and lie down on the bed," demanded my brother, equipping himself with a surgical mask and an apron, just as he had taken me into his room.

What? Undress? Why would I have to do that when he's not even going to use a stethoscope?

"What are you saying, you moron. Spit and blood could fly out while I'm examining your cavity. Your precious tracksuit could get dirty!"

"Oh, right! I see! Just as expected of my big bro, you're so clever!"

Having heard that perfect explanation that left no room for any further doubts, I quickly took my tracksuit, T-shirt and sports bra off all at once and stretched out on the bed. I folded the pillow and used it as a headrest.

However, this *is* still a bit embarrassing, after all…

Getting naked in front of my brother again…

"What are you talking about *again*, you moron. If you go to a real dentist, they'll take an X-ray. They won't look at your naked body, but

right through you, down to your bones! If you think about that, what's the deal with exposing your upper body?"

He was right. I really had scales falling from my eyes.

I *do* get the feeling that maybe I should be wearing the apron he's wearing right now, and *maybe* it would've been better to be honest with myself and go to a dentist rather than getting myself treated by an amateur, but well, my big bro can't do anything wrong!

… For some reason he was very smooth about that, but didn't he say something about blood flying out?

"Don't worry. I've studied quite a bit about the oral cavity since the last time I brushed your teeth."

Why don't you study for your entrance exams.

Even though you're my brother, when you're standing there beside my bed, wearing a surgical mask, an apron and without a dental license, your pervert level goes up significantly.

"Assistant!"

As the perverted quack snapped his fingers, a young girl in a white lab coat appeared from somewhere. A young girl, about six years old. I could see that she was blond from the few stray hairs peeking out from behind the mask and cap she wore, but they otherwise made it impossible to tell who she was at all. Quite unlike my brother, she looked beautiful even with the mask on.

But hey, who even is that?

A stranger young girl in our house… She has to be quite the *enfant terrible*![61]

"Don't worry. This is my assistant I hired in exchange for three French crullers."

---

[61] "Enfant terrible" (アンファンテリブル, *anfan teriburu*) is a French expression (literally meaning "unruly child") that originally refers to a child who embarrasses his parents with candid remarks, but evolved to describe a successful artist or creative "genius" who compromises his associates by acting unconventionally or offensively.

Now I'm worried! He hired this dental assistant for a shockingly low wage which could be less than 300 yen, depending on the circumstances!

The young girl, no, the assistant, silently pushed a cart in.

I couldn't see very well lying down, but in the metal tray on top were, unexpectedly, various dentist's tools.

A dental mirror, a scraper, a pin set.

Also, some other tools I didn't know the name of.

"Names? Those are surgical scissors, for example."

"That sounds like a weapon already!"[62]

"You use it to cut the gums."

"It's a torturing tool, more or less!"

Ignoring my remarks, the assistant prepared different things around the bed. She went about setting up electronic devices like an ultrasonic scaler (the one that goes "screech"), a drill (the one that goes "grrrrr"), surgical lights… Where on Earth had genuine medical equipment like this been hiding around our house? It was almost as if it were hidden inside of someone's shadow.

There didn't seem to be water-supplying equipment for gargling after all, but in place of that, there was a wash bowl.

"You're not going to pull out my teeth with things that look like pliers, right?"

"Hmph. By the way, because 'pulling teeth' and 'removing stitches' are homonyms in Japanese, the latter is referred to in a slightly different way among dentists," my brother said, demonstrating knowledge that didn't make it sound like he was actually knowledgeable, but had just memorized something.[63]

---

[62] Koyomi uses a very technical term when referring to the tool, 歯肉剪刀 (*shiniku sentou*). Karen probably says that it sounds like a weapon because it has 刀, the character for "sword" or "dagger" (among others), in it.

[63] The words used here in the original are 抜歯 (*basshi*, "pulling teeth") and 抜糸 (*basshi*, "removing stitches"). In order to avoid confusion, the latter is also pronounced *batsuito*.

"Well, I can't tell you anything before I've had a look, but *if* I pull out teeth I'm going to use an escalator, so it's okay."

"Escalator?"

Is that some kind of system like at the Tsuga-no-ki middle school I'm going to, that lets you progress smoothly to high school? Does that mean that you can pull out teeth just as smoothly?

"In Japanese, you write it 'levver'. It's something like a flathead screwdriver."

"So it's just a screwdriver then!"

You read it as "lever", normally![64]

Don't pull out your sister's teeth using the lever principle!

"Really? Well, then I won't pull your teeth. Even though I want to aim for a complete cure while I'm at it anyway…"

Complete cure? Well, since he's examining me anyway, I also want to be cured completely, but…

"By the way, with 'complete cure' we mean a treatment with root canal therapy. It's a type of treatment where a thin needle is used to scrape out the nerves from beneath the tooth's roots," muttered the assistant in a strangely old-fashioned way.[65]

Technical dentist speech is so confusing!

"Okay, open your mouth."

"Aaah…"

I opened my mouth, doing as I was told.

Was I following my brother's orders a bit too thoughtlessly?

"I said it before, but your teeth are really beautiful. If you look at the backsides with a mirror, their beauty really stands out."

---

[64] This doesn't make sense in English and other alphabetic languages, where you can see how a word is written and pronounced when you look at it. In Japanese, Koyomi wrongly pronounces the word 梃子 as *teishi*, when it is really pronounced *teko* (which Karen points out).

[65] When he brings up the "complete cure", Koyomi uses the term 根治 (*konji*), which means just that. Shinobu, however, subsequently says that 根治 is actually an abbreviation for 根管治療 (*konkan chiryou*, "root canal therapy").

I don't get embarrassed easily, but even my sense of shame kicks in when thinking of how the backsides of my teeth are being looked at with a mirror. I have the feeling that, in a sense, having every part of your mouth examined is even more embarrassing than exposing your upper body…

"Hey, you have thirty-two teeth. Your third molars, they're out, all four of them."

"Fhwat? Weally?"

I tilted my head, with my mouth still open.

I never stare at the inside of my mouth, so I hadn't even realized that.

"The third molars normally start coming out when you're about my age… But well, you're growing fast here and there, I guess," my brother said adoringly, softly stroking my breasts and continuing with the examination. Wait, did my brother really just, without any hesitation, grope his sister's breasts?

"Speaking of which, the third molars are also called wisdom teeth. Since you have already all four of them, aren't you already a wise lady for your age?"[66]

Being flattered like that made me feel better!

Because of that, I'm generously going to pretend the feeling of having my breasts groped was only my imagination.

"Assistant!"

The young girl, called upon by my brother, carelessly pulled at my lips. Oh, my lips are turned inside out! Having the fingers of several people being stuffed into your mouth *really* feels like you're being messed around with.

Why do they seem to have some kind of telepathic connection, these two?!

Really, who is this blond young girl?

Having not only my brother, but also a small girl of the same gender tormenting me sets my alarm bells off. Because my chest is out, they could

---

[66] In Japan, wisdom teeth are generally called 親知らず (*oyashirazu*). Directly translated, it means "[the teeth which] your parents don't know about".

see how fast my heart's beating! Embarrassing! What really may be embarrassing is that I'm exposing my chest in front of a young girl I don't even know, but…

"Wisdom teeth are hard to reach with a brush, so cavities can form pretty quickly there. But yours are all grown out neatly, so it seems like we don't have to worry about that… Hmmm, Karen-chan, I can't find a single cavity on your back teeth, let alone your front teeth," said my brother, after having fumbled around mercilessly in another person's mouth.

Eh? Really? I don't have a cavity? Well, if that really was the case, that'd be really good, but…

"From one to eight, they're all As."

Wait, teeth with cavities are called Cs, but you don't really call teeth without them As.

The amateur is exposing himself.

Hm, was it just a case of hypersensitivity, then?

I don't know what kind of condition hypersensitivity is, but…

"Wait, wait, it's too early to come to a conclusion already, Karen-chan. Even if your teeth are fine, there could be a problem with your gums."

"My gums? So, you're not going to use the surgical scissors you talked about earlier, right?"

That really makes me shudder.

Having your gums cut open… I'd rather have my teeth pulled out…

"Sometimes, the gums swell up from the same bacteria that are causing cavities. The gums are the flesh that holds the teeth, so normally, they are tight like this," said my brother, stroking my abs, and then continued "and when they're affected by the bacteria, they swell up like this," stroking my breasts.

He really groped them this time! And pretty firmly at that!

It had been hard to miss.

"Because of that, I'll check your periodontal pockets. Assistant!"

Doesn't he just want to say "assistant"…?

However, the young girl assistant, as if a reward of three donuts were something very desirable, brought the medicine my brother had silently requested.

Medicine? He's going to use medicine? An amateur?

"Come on, it's just wax. I'll put it on your lips so that they don't get hurt."

Is he going to do something that would hurt my lips? To his sister?

Without worrying about that, my brother spread the wax on my lips with his little finger. Because he had scooped it up with his little finger, he way he spread it felt really fetishistic.

"Assistant! No, no, not that, that's the bone file."

Don't mistake something for a tool with that dangerous of a name!

You could understand each other just fine without words up to this moment, so why now?

However, the tool that was handed over to my brother instead didn't look very safe either… Well, most dentist tools are pointy.

"This is called a probe. It's a tool that measures the depth of your periodontal pockets. I'm going to check your gums by poking them with the tip of this."

Why does he say it like that…

Are you really going to poke at something that could be swollen up with a sharp object like this?

"If it hurts, please scream."

"You mean I should raise my right hand or something, right!?"

"Well then, I'll start with the front teeth. Here we go."

"Ah! Oh! A-A-Ah!"

I didn't let out a scream, but weird sounds.

Having an unknown area—somewhere where nobody had ever touched me, even deeper and further inside than the inside of my mouth—poked at, made my delicate pride fall apart.

I'm being played with.

But, that feeling of having given up everything defenselessly… doesn't feel necessarily bad at all!

"Hmmm, I could get used to this…" my brother was also opening up to some weird feelings… If it went on like this, an accident from the past could repeat itself. Because there are three people (one of them a young girl) and an assortment of special tools this time, it feels significantly worse.

"I have to practice this for the day I'll do this to a beloved person."

Don't use the mouth of your sister as something to practice on!

And don't do this to a beloved person.

"Assistant, the cotton rolls, please. I'll stuff those into Karen-chan's mouth."

This time, my brother properly named what he wanted so the assistant wouldn't make a mistake again, but what is a cotton roll?

Don't stuff some dubious stuff into my mouth, okay?

My heart had been fluttering, but cotton rolls were just those cylinder-shaped pieces of cotton after all.[67] Those things that you use to create spaces inside of the mouth so that it becomes easier to examine it. Having my lips pulled apart by the young girl assistant had become pretty painful, so I was happy to have those.

"Fugou!"

The voice I let out this time wasn't even weird, but just ugly… If you just go by the words, you'd think of some wealthy guy, but if you had five pieces of cotton stuffed in your mouth all at once, everyone would react that way.[68]

That quack doctor (even though he's a false doctor!).

Looking at myself in the mirror attached to the surgical light, I saw that my face was all deformed and it looked like I was being prepared for some mysterious kind of role!

Then it came.

---

[67] Sounds strange in English, but Koyomi first uses the term ロールワッテ (*rouru watte*) here. Because *watte* is a foreign word (it comes from German, meaning "cotton"), you don't immediately know what it is in Japanese.

[68] The sound Karen makes here, ふごうっ (*fugou*) sounds like 富豪 (*fugou*, "wealthy person").

The pain that had been suppressed by being ogled and pricked by my brother grew stronger again. At that pain that really felt like my nerves were being scraped out directly, I threw my head back on reflex.

I spit out all the cotton.

"A-Are you okay, Karen-chan? Assistant, do we have a syringe or anesthetics?"

Stop.

Stop that, please.

I was more afraid of being given an injection by an amateur than being punched or having a cavity!

… However, directly piercing the part where it hurts and injecting anesthetics… Dentists do some crazy stuff.

"Eye doctors do stuff like injecting something into the back of the eyelid. Even someone like me, who desperately wants to lick Hanekawa's eyes, thinks that that's a bit too much."

"…"

I shivered, having come to know that there was someone in my family that had the egregious, no, repugnant desire to lick his classmate's eyes.

That fact became a mental anesthesia for me, and I was able to forget the pain for a moment.

Having patients forget their pains… This false doctor could, surprisingly, be a genius!

Well, among doctors without a license, there are people like Black Jack, after all… You could even say that judging from her appearance, that young girl assistant looks like Pinoko dragging along scrubs.[69]

"Is that so. Well, then I don't have to inject you with anesthetics I guess…"

My brother looked a bit disappointed saying that.

---

[69] *Black Jack* is an anime that revolves around an unlicensed surgeon named Black Jack healing other people while charging high fees. He has an assistant named Pinoko.

Wanting to give your sister an anesthetic injection is a pretty disgusting desire in itself… Why should the main character fall apart just because the series ended?

"Hey, I just wanted to see my sister, unable to properly close her mouth due to the injection, having drool and leftover food dribble from the sides of her mouth."

"Oh, so that's what it was! I'm relieved!"

"But there also seems to be nothing wrong with your periodontal pockets… Your gums are just as tight as those abs."

As if to compare them to the texture of my gums, my brother caressed my muscles. You know, just because they're abs, that doesn't mean you can touch them, okay?

"Hmm, so maybe it was hypersensitivity after all. That's a problem in and of itself, but…"

Diagnosing me like that, my brother poked the back of my palate with the scraper.

"Ah, ah," I said, reacting overly sensitively. No, I don't know the real definition, but that's not what hypersensitivity means, right?

Don't get addicted to poking around in your sister's mouth with a needle.

"Okay, so then let's end the treatment for now and just make some provisions," said my brother like a real dentist.

But wait, does provision mean that he's going to brush my teeth again, like that one time? Is he going to brush them?

He chuckled. "Even more than that!"

Even more than that!?

"Karen-chan, unlike that day, I'm a dentist today. I'm not going to *just* brush your teeth!"

How reliable! Even though you're not a dentist today either! Even though you're the same big brother, just like that day!

"When it comes to cavities, taking precautions is important. I've prepared not only a normal toothbrush, but also an electric one, interdental

brushes and even floss. I'm going to make your teeth sparkle, distal to medial!"

I'm going to be made sparkly!

My brother tightened the thread of floss like some kind of killer… Overflowing with the healthy courage of wanting to brush his sister's teeth.

No, that's not healthy.

But… Since he's brushing my teeth, isn't it healthy after all?[70]

"Okay, open your mouth wide! Stick your tongue out!"

"Aaah"

"The backside of a tongue really kinda looks like exposed intestines…"

Is that what you say to someone who just stuck out her tongue?

He says that like he has seen exposed intestines before…

"Squishy-squishy"

Don't touch exposed intestines with a thread of floss!

I get the feeling my tongue's going to be cut off, even though I didn't even lie to anyone!

… It's pulled out if you're a liar, and it's cut off for… sparrows when they've eaten glue? Was that it?[71]

"Screechy-screechy"

"Fwont himifate founs hike fhis! (Don't imitate sounds like this!)" I remarked with an expression in parentheses like in a manga, but my brother was fully occupied with cleaning the inside of my mouth. I didn't say anything else because I didn't want to be a hindrance… But that screeching made it sound like my teeth were being cut off with a saw…

---

[70] Another wordplay based on homonyms. It has been translated here as "healthy courage" to help this part make some sense, but in Japanese, the expression used is 軒昂なる気概 (*kenkou naru kigai*, "high-spirited courage"). 軒昂 (*kenkou*, "high-spirited") and 健康 (*kenkou*, "health") are pronounced the same, so Karen is able to make a sneaky remark about her own narration here.

[71] Karen is referring to the traditional fable of the Tongue-Cut Sparrow (舌切り雀, *shita-kiri suzume*), where a kind old man helps an injured sparrow, but his avaricious wife cuts off the bird's tongue after discovering it ate some glue that was meant to repair a ladder even though she had no intention of feeding it.

Entrusting him with the spaces between my teeth, even harder to reach than their back side even for a real dentist… That ultimate passiveness let a feeling bloom in my bosom, a feeling I'd never savored before, a feeling without a name… Just when I was about to drown in that feeling…

"Blurgh! Blurghgurhulh!"

I literally drowned.

I wasn't able to tell what happened to me.

I was just as shocked as the first time I had been on the receiving end of a power move from my master, or just as confused as when that conman did something to me.

How could I drown if I was on land? I was really confused, but once I noticed it, it was clear what was happening to my body.

The young girl assistant at the side of the bed had, without me noticing it, put a strange electric apparatus in my mouth and was releasing a torrent of water from it.

"Three-way syringe."

The young girl uttered, in a noble voice, the name of the device that sounded like a move in a fantasy battle—no, I was the one with that thing in her mouth.[72]

So that's what it was! I didn't know its name, but it's that tool that can shoot out water, mist and air! But even then, the torrent is way too strong! No, too much!

Don't shower my mouth with a stream of water so strong that it's affecting the narrative parts of the story!

Does that assistant dislike me? Could it be that she tried to pass that dangerous-sounding thing earlier on purpose?

"Hah… My sister is lying on the bed, with a foaming mouth and drowning… I feel like drowning in that sight myself…"

---

[72] In Japanese, Shinobu saying the name of the device is written with the verb 口にする (*kuchi ni suru*, literally "to take inside one's mouth", meaning "to say something"). That's why Karen adds that last bit of the sentence.

This time, my brother looked like he was drowning in a nameless emotion (what a terrible reciprocal effect!), but he didn't forget his duties as a doctor (even if he's not really one) and issued an order toward the little assistant.

"Aspirator!"

Great, finally I'll be freed from this torrent of water… Hey, hwaaah! My tongue is being sucked at! She *really* is doing this on purpose, this young girl! What does this assistant even *assist* my brother in!?

"Electric toothbrush!"

Uwaaah! An amount of rotations that could never be reproduced by humans!

"Ultrasonic scaler!"

Nooo! My plaque is being removed by an orchestra of blackboard-scratching sounds resonating relentlessly in my skull!

"Inter-dental brush!"

Ow! The spaces between my teeth are cleaned vigorously, like test tubes in a laboratory!

"Dental impression!"

Stop it! Don't test how I put my teeth together… Hm, this one doesn't really hurt or itch…

I just bit on a dry, thin piece of paper.

But then, as if to mock my short moment of carelessness, that pain overcame me for the third time. I spit out all the water in my mouth that the aspirator hadn't removed.

Spitting out all the water left in my mouth until nothing was left… In what seemed like a funny turn of events with a bit of rhetoric mixed in resulted in my brother, the little assistant and my upper body completely drenched.

Good thing I took off my jersey.

There also was a feeling of satisfaction that I had been able to strike back at the little assistant, who had tormented me so much. But a strong pain that I couldn't suppress with those feelings ran along the insides of my mouth.

Not able to lie on my back anymore, I did a somersault. But even then I couldn't get over the pain, it just grew.

"What is this, you don't have any cavities, right? Hm? Wait, maybe…"

Wiping of the water I had spit on him with a towel, my brother did a eureka pose, like a doctor who had found a hidden lesion.

He's really exaggerating it.

"Karen-chan, I'll inspect you one more time."

"N-No. It hurts, it hurts, it hurts. I don't want to anymore. I don't want to because it hurts."

"It's okay, I'll just poke your cheek a little."

Is he going to palpate from the outside of my cheek? Maybe that'll hurt too, but if he doesn't touch my teeth directly, I could deal with it, maybe.

"O-Okay, then go ahead."

It was already hard to keep still for the palpation, but the little assistant grabbed my shoulder—me still being a bit dizzy from the somersault—and forcibly pushed me down on my back. This young girl is really strong for some reason!

"So-Softly, okay? Poke me softly, okay?"

I was out of character regarding my choice of words, but I just feared the pain that much. My brother, smiling at his poor sister like that, said, "Yeah, I'll do it softly," and poked my cheek.

From the inside.

"Uwaaaaaaaaah!"

I let out a scream and, before noticing it, bit my brother's finger.

I tasted my brother's finger, but compared to the lightning bolt of pain that had run alongside the inside of my cheek, it had been nothing special.

My brother growled, holding back the pain. As if he were used to being bitten (what kind of life is that?) he quickly pulled his finger from my mouth.

"Wha-Whatwhatwhat? What did you do? Did you use your fingernails? Are you going to examine my scraped-off mucosal cells under a microscope?"

Being poked from the inside had been unexpected, but even then, why does having your cheek poked hurt so much?

"Karen-chan. You don't have cavities."

My brother presented his examination results, licking his finger like a swordmaster licks his blade. I'm sure he's doing that in order to ease the pain, but that finger was in my mouth until just now…

"N-No cavity? What is it then?"

"Mouth ulcer. An inflammation of the mouth mucosa. You're one of the Fire Sisters, after all."

Mouth ulcer? Because I'm one of the Fire Sisters?

Isn't that last bit unnecessary?

So that's why it hurt when I bit on the paper!

They say mouth ulcers tend to form where you're likely to bite!

Of course, it also hurt when I had the cotton put in—after all, I had it pressed on the affected part pretty hard.

As I was grasping the situation, the tension also went away.

It hurts just as much as a cavity, but looking into the future, it's not as bad at all! Maybe it'll even heal naturally.

I was happy that I didn't have to go to the dentist, but I couldn't help but think about the meaning of the farce that had been happening in this room.

"You have to properly care for the inside of the mouth, not only the teeth, gums and tongue," said my attending doctor, as if to wrap things up. But thinking about it, if it really is a mouth ulcer, couldn't he have seen it without having to poke my cheek?

Well, I'll take that pain as punishment for not taking care of my mouth properly…

I wanted to get up, but the little assistant didn't let me go, keeping me pinned onto the bed.

Hm? Was there more?

"Of course. Even though it's just a mouth ulcer, you shouldn't underestimate it. If germs get in, it could become worse. As a finishing touch, I'm going to sterilize your mouth," said my brother and took out a

small bottle of one-time-use mouth wash. Alright, he wants me to gargle with that. That's where the wash bowl comes in.

Because he had been right about the mouth ulcer, I was going to obey him and stretched out my hand, but he didn't pass me the mini-bottle.

"?"

"Hey hey, Karen-chan, I don't think someone like you, who just spit out water like some kind of magician earlier, can properly gargle."

Hmm.

Feeling like I was being laughed at for not even being able to gargle was upsetting, but looking at my drenched body, I can't really argue against that.

It'd be unseemly to drool all over the place despite not even having been anesthetized. As someone with all her third molars—that is, her wisdom teeth—out, I should bow my head.

"But, what are you going to do then? Tell me, big bro."

"There's only one way. I'll sterilize your mouth…"

My brother stylishly flipped open the mouth wash's cap with his thumb and drank up the liquid in one go.

No, he only stored it in his cheeks.

"… by mouth-to-mouth feeding."

★

"Whew! I managed to get my immortality-infused saliva all over Karen-chan's oral cavity. With that, no matter if it's cavities or mouth ulcers, there's no doubt it'll completely heal, right Shinobu?"

"You siblings are affected by something way worse."

TSUKIHI BRUSHING

Heroine Book 7: Fire Sisters
8 July 2015

Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Translation: Haremless

Brushing her hair is a girl's dedication, her daily ritual. But something becoming a habit also means that you become oblivious to changes. I, Araragi Tsukihi, hadn't been aware of that, not until that day, that morning, and that time, when I felt it.

"Ow!"

"What is it, Tsukihi-chan? My dear sister?"

My brother, hearing his sister's scream, came rushing into the bathroom. I pulled the hairbrush out of my hair and explained myself.

"I stepped on my hair."

I began.

"It's already past my tips of my toes, so I guess I have to cut it now."

My brother had graduated from high school, and Nadeko-chan seemed to be on her way to recovering as well, so there was no point letting my hair grow out to wish for good luck for them. I felt like lopping it all off, nice and short this time. Maybe I could even style it like Nadeko-chan.

It was still early in the morning, more than enough time to make a reservation for today at a hair salon. I was actually quite a regular as well, so I could probably get some leeway. I hadn't done anything with my hair except for a few trims to keep the ends neat, so I could use a real styling at a beauty salon.

"So, brother."

"Yes?"

"Give me back my 30000 yen."

My brother stared at my outstretched hand, then began to turn around as if the monumentally important fact that his precious sister had stepped on her own hair were nothing but a trifling matter. My brother, who had also incidentally been growing out his hair with no less gusto than myself, took hold of my shoulders with a stern look.

"Tsukihi-chan, you should treat the money you lend someone, even your own family, as if you're never getting it back. Money is precious, and you should never give it out if you're not prepared to not get it back."

"Wow, such wise words! Coming from the person I lent money to!"

So that means I'm related to some piece of trash.

You could call this a tragedy in two acts.

"Fine, just give me 10000 back, at least. I need it for the beauty salon."

"Hmm, I see. So that means that, on the other hand, if you didn't need to go to the beauty salon, you wouldn't need the 10000 back."

"No, it doesn't mean that at all."

"Alright, it's settled."

"Nothing's settled until you settle that debt."

Why are we even related?

And somehow he still has the nerve to lecture his sisters.

"You know, you're starting to remind me of a certain scam artist, borrowing money from girls in middle school and never returning it."

"Ugh…"

It looked like I'd hit a sore spot and a bitter smile stretched across his face.

"Alright, I think I get it now. I'll draft up a loan repayment plan to have the 30000 back to you by the end of the month, so how about we settle for me being your stylist and cutting your hair today, Tsukihi-kun?"

"Why are you acting like I'm the one—"

Whatever.

I couldn't really blame him because I had nothing on myself either, but I'm just the type of person who hates not being able to do the things I decide to do on the day I decide to do them. I'd decided to get a haircut today, so I wanted it done today.

"More importantly, you know how to cut hair?"

"I didn't think you'd underestimate me like this. Do you even know who cut off Hanekawa's braids?"

And now I wish I could have lived my life not knowing.

But I guess it could be interesting to see how it turns out since he does have experience. And if I don't like it, I'll just charge him an outrageous interest rate far beyond legal limits, then demand that he pay immediately.

"Okay then, show me what you've got."

"No problem, I was just thinking that I needed to practice in case I ever have another chance to cut Hanekawa's hair."

He just told me I was practice out loud.

And I'm not sure he should be practicing for something like that…

"So, I'm going to need you to take all your clothes from your waist up off and sit down on this chair."

He said, strapping a scissor holster around his waist the moment we arrived at his room. What? Take all my clothes off? Why did he need me to take my clothes off if he wasn't going to make me change into something else?

"What are you saying, you moron. What's baring your upper body in comparison to how the hair stylist bares every facet of his personal life chatting with his customers?"

"Ooh! I see! It all makes sense now! You're smarter than you look! Is that what you were expecting me to say?"

You'd better come up with a better explanation if you want your sister to take all her clothes off from the waist up.

"The little bits of hair will fall into your kimono and make you all itchy. I couldn't bear to watch your delicate skin being prickled like that. Any brother would want to protect his little sister."

"Don't you have a barber cape or something?"

Don't tell me the guy who had more than ten different kinds of scissors in his scissor holster, and kept his long bangs in place with a clip like he was some ultra-chic stylist, didn't even have a barber cape.

I'm not sure I should even call him a stylist, more like a crazier Edward Scissorhands on the loose.

I always wore kimonos around the house, so it was difficult to only take the top off. Looking in the mirror, I saw a psychopath holding a pair of thinning shears and a middle school student wearing a kimono with the top half pulled open. What sort of brave new world was this supposed to be? It's not like the series is allowed to go anywhere it likes just because it's finished.

"Assistant!"

As the perverted sham hair stylist snapped his fingers, a young girl in a white lab coat appeared from somewhere. A young girl, about six years old. I could see that she was blond from the few stray hairs peeking out from behind the mask and cap she wore, but they otherwise made it impossible to tell who she was at all. But really, I don't care how cute you think the mask makes you look, why is a hair stylist's assistant wearing a mask and a cap?

That had me confused before I started wondering who she even was.

"Don't worry. This is my assistant I hired in exchange for three golden chocolate donuts."

"I should be worried about her shockingly low wage which, depending on the circumstances, could be less than 300 yen, but could you explain to me first why your assistant is dressed like a dentist's assistant?"

"That's because I didn't really know what a hair stylist's assistant looks like, so I just had her use an old costume."

"You don't even know that? Go figure it out!"

"You can't expect me to go into a hair salon! The people in there are all so stylish, it's scary!"

Here I was, about to let a sham hair stylist, one who had never been inside an actual hair salon because he was afraid of how stylish the people inside were, cut my hair. I suppose this is why people call me rash.

"Well they say barbers also used to work as surgeons, so it makes perfect sense for my assistant to be wearing a surgeon's outfit."

"I have no idea how you think that makes 'perfect sense' at all, there's only so far you can stretch the truth, you know."

The young girl, no, the assistant, silently pushed a cart in.

I couldn't see very well because of the angle, but looking in the mirror, there was a plastic tray on the cart, and on that tray were all sorts of brushes and hair dryers. They were the sort you might expect to find in a genuine beauty salon; all the tools needed for a haircut assembled in a single set.

"Not that I've learned how to use them and their names…"

"Ahem, could you stop making your customers worry any more than they have to?"

Not that I wouldn't be worried if he hadn't said that.

In any case I was already as worried as I possibly could be about my brother's hair-cutting skills, but as for his assistant, she seemed to have dyed her own hair blond (probably) and was quickly and efficiently going through all the necessary preparations. She went about setting up various pieces of equipment around the chair, including a shampoo unit that even had its own backwash basin, as well as the far infrared light beam hair curling apparatus, with the fluency of a seasoned veteran. I wondered where exactly in my house this entire beauty set had been hidden. It was almost as if it were hidden inside of someone's shadow.

"So, learning from my past mistakes, the shampoo unit's all set up here so if you feel like throwing up, you know where to go."

"Why would I feel like throwing up during a haircut…?"

The assistant placed a few magazines on my lap as I began trembling. Maybe she was just a thoughtful person, but it almost seemed like she felt sorry for me. Like she was doing all she could for me.

I didn't really get what was going on, but I knew something was bound to be off if this young girl was feeling sorry for me.

"Don't worry, Tsukihi-chan. I really have no sense at all for what a hair stylist is supposed to do, but I know I won't have any of that pesky common sense standing between me and the way I treat my customers."

"Don't you think you should?"

"Now, allow me to shave you."

Said my brother, ever the avant-garde intellectual, as he began to lather some shaving cream in a bowl.

"Hehehe, did you know that legally, only actual barbers' shops and not beauty salons are allowed to give a customer a shave with shaving cream?"

"Haa! I can't believe you'd actually try to throw out some random trivia everyone knows like you're a genius!"

"I'll make sure you don't have a single bit of fuzz left on your silky-smooth face!"

"Wouldn't you just call that 'hair' normally?"

Don't talk about a person's face like a fruit.

He might seem like an idiot from the things he said, but the way he lathered the cream really was something. It looked like he could beat a cup of matcha better than me from the way he was frothing up the soapy water, and I was in the tea club.[73]

I knew what a face shaving was, but they didn't do it at beauty salons, so I was somewhat interested.

"You know, the way you lather the cream makes a difference in how good the shave feels. So as a professional, I feel a duty to make sure this cream is thoroughly beat and fluffy. The bubbles should foam up until they're at least as full as your breasts."

---

[73] Matcha (抹茶, *matcha*) is finely ground powder of specially grown and processed green tea leaves, and is used in traditional Japanese tea ceremonies.

He said as he checked the curvature of the bubbles against my bare breasts with a practiced dexterity.

Wait, that means only people with little sisters can be barbers!

"Come on, you're touching your sister's boobs too much!"

"I feel like you've been saying more than 'I'm platinum mad' recently…"

"Well the only reason for that I can think of would be that you're touching my boobs too much."

"That makes me sound like a baby who can't quite wean."

"Just let go already, or do I have to put you on a weaning diet?"

You better get those hands and their practiced dexterity off already.

How can you even call yourself a professional?

"I'll put mustard all over my boobs."

"I think that'd end worse for you than me… Just to be sure, you don't have anything on your face, right, like makeup?"

"Nope, and on top of that I don't have anything on my upper body either."

"Alright, we're good."

"What's good? There's nothing good about your little sister being naked from the waist up."

"Here we go."

Anyway, my brother tied my hair up with a hairband and then began applying the shaving cream to my bare face. Ooh, this feels sort of warm but really nice! I looked into the mirror to see myself appearing more like I had grown a luscious beard like Santa Claus, instead of having been shaved.

Ho! Ho! Ho!

"Your face looks like a death mask when it's all white."

"…"

Us two siblings didn't always see things the same way, evidently.

"Now, I'll take this safety razor and… Haa, haa, haa, haa, haa—"

The hand holding the safety razor began to tremble, making it seem not very safe at all. Hey, wait a second, you're not going to point a sharp object at me with your hand shaking like that, are you?

"Worry not, sister. I'm just trembling with excitement."

"As your sister, that makes me even more worried."

"I can barely keep my heart from beating out of my chest with excitement when I think of how I'm just seconds away from putting this blade against my little sister's delicate skin."

"You better keep your heart right where it is. For the rest of your life."

"It'll be fine, I've wielded a katana a hundred times longer than this razor in battle."

"Every word I hear from you just makes me more worried."

"Here I come!"

I'd rather he didn't come at me at all, but he did, wielding the blade with a surprising, almost timid, tenderness.

So this would be my first time being shaved.

My whole body felt immersed in a floating sensation, like I was lying on a bed of bubbles, along with a physical sense of unease at having my skin caressed by a razor-sharp blade, and a nagging apprehension at the thought of the delicate part of my body that was my face being at the complete mercy of another person.

"Haa, haa, haa, haa, haa…"

My brother's breathing grew more and more intense as he watched me, unable to move a muscle and trying to take the shallowest breaths I could. You know what, I'll let you touch my boobs, but please don't let this be the experience that awakens something even weirder in you, alright?

If my brother was telling the story himself, that would be one thing, but I don't think I was nearly skilled enough of a narrator to follow up on something so abnormal.

The experience of being shaved was "thrilling" in so many different meanings, but in the end, possibly due to my brother's powers of self-control, I emerged unscathed.

"Well, Tsukihi-chan, you didn't have that much hair in the first place… Oops, there's still some shaving cream left on your forehead."

He said, as he bent down close to my face, licking the cream off of the spot on my forehead close to my hairline. He seemed as excited as he would be licking the frosting from a cake off my face, except for the fact that the "cream" he had been licking was soap bubbles.

"Bleh!"

He fell onto the shampoo unit.

Are you going to throw up?!

"Cough, cough… Whew, I thought I was going to die for a second."

"What kind of barber thinks they're going to die during a haircut? Get it together, would you?"

"I was holding the razor in one hand and the shaving cream container in the other, what was I supposed to do?"

"I guess."

"How about this, Tsukihi-chan, cough, cough, do you want me to shave the back of your neck too?"

"The coughing doesn't exactly make that sound very appealing. I don't think I'm brave enough to have a blade on the back of my neck, though."

"Well that's frustrating. I'll just have to wait for the next time."

I prayed from the bottom of my heart that this would be the first and last time.

I just hope Hanekawa-san firmly shuts him down… Although we'll have no idea who his next victim will be, then.

"Now then, Tsukihi-chan, let's get started on what we're really here for. It's time to cut that hair nice and short."

My brother put the razor down on the cart, then unsheathed a pair of scissors and a comb from his scissor belt in one nimble motion.

"So, how do you want it?"

He was going all the way with playing the part.

But unfortunately, no matter how hard he tried, all he looked like was a bad attempt at being a psychotic hair stylist. It wasn't even a question of

his acting ability, his long and unkempt hair made anything he tried to say completely unconvincing.

"Hmm, how do I want it?"

I thought that cutting it short like Nadeko-chan might be nice, but since I'd already grown it out this long, I may as well swing by a different style on the way there. There was also the fact that if my brother messed up while cutting my hair that short, it would be beyond saving.

Alright, how about a lob then?

"A lob? What's that? Something like twintails? I'm pretty particular when it comes to twintails."

It seemed like our sham hair stylist had mistaken "lob" as a short form of "lobster".

He wasn't being "particular", just particularly annoying right now.

"It's halfway between leaving it long and a bob, so you know, put it together and you get a lob."

"Ah, I see."

Said my brother without a hint of shame, as he put another completely unnecessary hairclip in his hair almost flauntingly, likely to hide his embarrassment at the sad misunderstanding he had no excuse for.

"My apologies. I'm not very familiar with all this hair stuff, I don't even know the differences among conditioner, shampoo and hair treatment."

"…"

I was finding it hard to continue watching his "I'm not really interested in all that fashion stuff, I'll have you know" shtick any more.

And by the way, those are barely different things anymore, so you're not too far off the mark.

"So, give me a lob, and a light, fluffy perm after. Seems like you have all those expensive tools for it."

"It's a misunderstanding! I mean, understood. 'It's a misunderstanding!' has been my go-to line this past year because of all the times I've had to use it, so it's the first thing that comes out of my mouth whenever something happens."

"What sort of series have we been in this whole time? We hit eighteen volumes, you know?"

Snip, snip snip—went the scissors. I had no idea how or where he managed to get these tools, but all of his tools, like the safety razor he had just been using, were top of the line.

So this sham hair stylist started cutting my hair right away, without even washing it first… Not that I mind, I already washed it, anyway.

Clip, clip.

His scissors went along, cutting a girl's hair with barely a hint of hesitation. This actually left a good impression, resolutely doing his business fearing neither my hair, nor gods.

I honestly get quite annoyed with people asking me why I changed my hairstyle, especially with how often I do change it, and if not that, being thought of not as a woman of affairs, but a woman of many affairs. But as a staunch opponent of the view that a girl's hair is her most important possession in this world, I liked my brother's way of thinking, "it's getting long so it's time to cut it."

I guess that's what it means to have some experience under your belt… Although I never actually knew Hanekawa-san when she still had long hair. And now that I think of it, I remember hearing that my brother's girlfriend, Senjougahara-san, used to have long hair too.

"Hehehe ♪"

My brother was spinning the pair of scissors around and around in the palm of his hand to the rhythm of a song he was humming. It seemed like he was getting into the groove. Looking more carefully in the mirror, I saw that he was spinning the scissors not by the finger hole, but only around the finger brace.

Don't do anything dangerous like that above someone's head!

Putting that aside, the haircut itself went along incredibly smoothly; what wasn't so smooth, however, was the feeling of the bits of my hair that fell onto my bare skin, which was a bit uncomfortable. I can see how stripping down from the waist up avoided the problem of the bits of hair

getting all over the inside of my kimono, but it didn't do anything to help the fact that the hair would still get all over my body.

It's like he was looking out for the kimono more than me.

"What? Really? It's itchy?"

"Don't talk to me while you're spinning those scissors around! I'll be more than itchy if you keep doing that!"

"I see. Assistant!"

Said my brother.

And as soon as I turned around, there was his assistant, the young girl, sweeping up my hair with a broom. She may have been dressed like a surgeon's assistant, but there was something unmistakably like a beauty salon assistant who excelled at her job in the fluid grace of her every movement.

She might actually be really good at what she does.

She might actually be quite famous.

It was a complete mystery to me why someone with a reputation like her would be working for my brother, but in any case, she took the tool our resident sham stylist had asked for from the cart and handed it to him, just as requested. It was a convenient little neck duster.

"Brush, brush, brush."

"Kyaa!"

Stop gently caressing my naked upper body with the brush! Stop tickling me! This is just turning into some perverted play!

"Is it? It might be quite a hassle, but how about this? I'll painstakingly pick up each and every single hair from your bare skin with my hands, one by one."

"Kyaa, kyaa, kyaa! You're grabbing me so tenderly now! It's even more like some play now! The difficulty's going up, it's hard mode now."

"All the sweat on your skin is making this so hard… Getting one of my sisters to strip from the waist up might have been a mistake this time."

You'd think that'd be a mistake no matter the situation.

Has it ever worked out for you?

"You sure sweat a lot since you have a good metabolism, Tsukihi-chan."

"Most of this is nervous sweat, though."

"Hmm? Let me see."

"Could you not try to check the temperature of my sweat? Nervous sweat doesn't necessarily mean it's colder, you know? And could you stop putting your hand under my armpit to feel the difference in temperature between the sweat and my body?"

"Hmm. Well, we'll leave removing the little bits of hair clinging to your body for another time…"

My brother looked down at my hair that had fallen to the ground, setting the discussion of what to do with the brother clinging to my body for another time aside, as well.

His assistant was still working as hectically as before, but she could hardly keep up, seeing as the hairs were long enough to reach past my toes.

"It almost feels like a waste to throw out all this luscious and voluminous hair. There must be some way to reuse it."

Maybe there is.

I never had to worry about this when I went to the beauty salon, but someone might wonder if something had happened in our house if they saw this much hair being thrown out in the garbage one day.

"Assistant, put all the hair you collect into a plastic bag and store it for safekeeping. We'll see later whether we can use it as pillow stuffing."

"Pillow stuffing?!"

"With this much hair, we might even be able to make a whole futon out of it, not just a pillow. There are futons stuffed with goose down and sheep's wool, so why not human hair? It'll be so soft you won't believe."

"I think it'll be so heavy I can't sleep."

"Or how about making another one of these neck dusters using your hair? I'd be cleaning the hair off your body with a human hair duster. Dusting off hair with hair, ladies and gentlemen, I do believe we have created a perpetual motion machine."

The spark of environmentally sustainable brilliance that had struck my brother seemed to have cheered him up, and he continued cleaning up the

ends of my hair ever more rhythmically than before. He switched between his numerous types of scissors, cheekily layering my hair into a lob.

But at least, at this rate it doesn't seem like I'll need to go get it cut again at a hair salon tomorrow.

"Alright, on to the bangs."

"Sure. They've actually grown out a bit longer than how Nadeko-chan used to wear them, so they're starting to merge with the sides, so could you just cut it so it has a nice defined front?"

"… Now that you mention it, didn't you slice off a bit of her bangs a while ago?"

"What? Did I?"

"How could you forget about that?"

My brother began to clean up my bangs using a comb and a hairclip, with a look on his face as if he were threatening to slice off a bit of my bangs. I was worried that he might do a straight-across princess cut style[74] because that was his personal preference, but it seemed like the style he had chosen would require quite a bit more delicate styling, like the back.

"Hehehe, maybe I'll cut it just long enough that it'll get into your eyes."

"That's as creative as you can get trying to annoy me?"

"Or I could curl your eyelashes so they always poke into your eyes…"

"Don't try something that advanced, please."

"Just kidding, just kidding. I would never do something like that, as someone who loves eyeballs."

"I'd prefer if you brushed it off as a joke for a different reason. You can't just joke about these sorts of things."

"Where do you want the parting?"

"Hmm, I guess I'll go with right."

"Okay, so about 70-30."

That's fine, but could you not say it like that?

---

[74] A princess cut (姫カット, *hime katto*) is a hairstyle consisting of straight, usually cheek-length sidelocks and frontal fringe. As the name suggests, the style is thought to have originated, or at least become common, in the Imperial court during the Heian Period of Japanese history.

So, continuing along, after he had finished touching up my bangs, his assistant the young girl brought a square mirror around to my back, her little feet tapping the ground with each step. Now I had a 360-degree view of my hair through the large mirror. Woah, it might not be professional quality but this was better than I expected. I was secretly preparing myself for the possibility that I might have to go through the "Hey, you cut this part too short! Could you just cut this part a bit shorter to balance it out?! Oh my gosh you cut it too short again!" routine, but my brother was actually pretty good.

"From the angle I'm at, the two mirrors are forming an infinity mirror and it's like my little sister's boobs are going off into infinity, this is the best."

"Can't you just let me be impressed with you for once?"

"My bad, I shouldn't have said that. I almost lost my precious sister's trust. Why don't we do a scalp massage next to improve your circulation? Let your brother massage your head and your breasts until you're all nice and loose."

"You're getting obsessed with my boobs again."

Your precious sister doesn't have any trust in you left to lose.

"You see, you have to massage the scalp softly with the balls of your fingers, like this."

"Could you not show me your scalp massage technique on my boobs? How long are you going to be pulled into my boobs for?"

What does it mean to be pulled into my boobs in the first place? I thought to myself, retorting to my own retort (although I suppose it was better than being pulled into safety razors), after which I reminded my brother of one thing, just in case he had forgotten.

"Don't forget the light and fluffy perm. I want it a bit wavy, okay?"

"I knew exactly what you were going to say. I'll put such an amazing perm in your hair, every student at your school's hair will start coiling up into waves the moment they see you at the beginning of your new term."

"I don't want it that curled. It wouldn't even be light or fluffy anymore if it started coiling up."

"Alright, let's see this machine."

My brother rolled the far infrared light beam hair-curling apparatus over himself, without the help of his assistant. I could already see where this was going the moment he started with his "stylist" act, but I hoped that I was just mistaken.

I had managed to avoid the expected outcome of a sloppy haircut, there was no way something like him turning the dial on the far infrared light beam hair-curling apparatus the wrong way and setting my hair on fire would happen.

"Oh no! I turned the dial on the far infrared light beam hair curling apparatus the wrong way and set your hair on fire! 'Cause you're one of the Fire Sisters, get it?!"

"You didn't need to tell me the last part!"

Hot! Hot! Hot! Hot!

And this was where the shampoo unit that my brother had brought to serve as nothing more than a vomit bowl, seeing as I didn't need my hair washed, proved to be useful in the most unexpected of ways.

He forcefully shoved my flaming head into the backwash basin and pressed the showerhead right up against my scalp, soaking it in water, then immediately got to work putting out the fire.

"Glug, grgggle, cough, I'm drowning I'm drowning I'm drowning!"

"My bad, that was close. I almost drowned my little sister again."

"'Again'?! You did something like this before?!"

"It's okay, it's okay. Everything's alright. Assistant, remove the mirror."

He ordered his assistant, not wasting a second after shutting off the shower. Hey wait, let me see what the perm looks like before you take the mirror away!

He was way too used to covering things up.

"Calm down, Tsukihi-chan. Don't panic, and don't get up. Stay in exactly the same position you're in now. I'm just going to wash your hair to finish off the haircut. It should still be repairable."

"R-Really…?"

Finishing off with a hair wash, I guess he was leaning toward the barber shop treatment more than the beauty salon course. It seemed more and more like he was actually clueless about hair salons and not just acting that way. No surprise considering that the shampoo unit was set up to use with the face down instead of the face up…

"Are you sure it's going to be okay? I don't want to see you carrying a 300 trillion-yen debt."

"Well I'm sure you could do something about that debt if you wanted to… And isn't that way too much interest for a 30000-yen loan? I don't think you could rack up that much even with compound interest."

"So how are you going to repair it? Do you have some sort of fancy shampoo?"

"You betcha. This stuff will get that burnt hair looking luscious and flowing down to the cuticles. However, as you can see, I burnt both of my hands when I was trying to put out the raging inferno on your head, so because of that—"

He turned away looking despondently, and after looking around as if searching for some other solution that nonetheless eluded him, hung his shoulders weakly.

"I'll have to wash your hair with my mouth."

★

"Whew! I managed to get my immortality-infused saliva all over Tsukihi-chan's hair. With that, the damaged hair will be repaired and there's no doubt it'll completely heal, right Shinobu?"

"I think her hair would have gone back to the way it was even without your help…"

KOYOMI HISTORY

MADOGATARI EXHIBITION PAMPHLET
27 November 2015
MIJIKANAMONOGATARI
11 September 2024

TRANSLATION: HAREMLESS

"Oh silly you, Araragi-kun. Are you studying history? Isn't that nice. I'm sure your personification of the unsightly beauty of pointless hard work will be recorded for posterity."

No holding back right from the beginning I see. Don't you dare record anything unsightly about me for posterity. But now that I think about it, back when I first met Senjougahara Hitagi she was just like this. And ever since then I've met so many different Senjougahara Hitagis.

"Isn't that nice. Actually, that's wonderful. It's important to look back on the road you've been walking on to see how far you've come every once in a while, Arasuji-san."[75]

That doesn't mean you should talk about people like the road you've been walking on. My name is Araragi. Don't give me something like "sorry,

[75] 粗筋 (*arasuji*) means the plot or summary of a story that could be thought of like a metaphorical "road".

I was taking a nap".[76] Get yourself a good night's sleep Hachikuji, I'll wake you up.

"What's the problem Araragi-senpai? Leave that autobiography you've been wanting to write to your loyal slave. There's no one else who can recount the tale of our beginning, how we took each other's hands and found true friendship in each other from the moment we met with as great detail as yours truly."

It wouldn't be an autobiography if you wrote it… And don't write any lies about me, Kanbaru. I remember our "beginning" being quite intense and rather unpleasant. Although we really did find true friendship in each other afterwards. But could you please leave out the part about taking each other's hands.

"Koyomi-onii-chan… Koyomi-onii-chan. Do you still remember me? It's Nadeko."

Of course… I still remember you. The things I did to Sengoku. The things I didn't do for Sengoku. The path of the snake that she went on. There's no way I can say that I never did any of that. And I can't say sorry anymore either.

"That's exactly right. But you shouldn't just be satisfied with yourself because you learned your lesson, Araragi-kun. You have to think about what could come next and apply it to whatever you face from now on."

That's right. And I'm sure it is, coming from you. Coming from someone who could bravely walk toward their future all alone. But Hanekawa, try to remember how it was back then every once in a while.

---

[76] 仮眠しました (*kamin shimashita*, "I was taking a nap") sounds very similar to Mayoi's usual gag 噛みました (*kamimashita*, "I stuttered").

"…"

… Aah, I know. I know. There's no way I would forget you. The wounds that you gave me… and the wounds that I gave you. Actually I'd be in trouble if you forgot about me. Because you were the start of it all, and the end of it all.

And then we'll start again.

We keep coming and going like the seasons. We'll keep walking down our road while things unfold around us and we look to the future. And we'll keep turning the pages on our dazzlingly bright calendar.[77]

[77] Koyomi's first name, 暦 (*koyomi*), means "calendar".

YOTSUGI STRESS

Heroine Book 8: Ononoki Yotsugi
22 December 2015
Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Translation: Haremless

"Unlimited Rulebook."

Ononoki Yotsugi said, as she unleashed whatever that move or more like that brute force attack was called, blowing away half of the monkey aberration that I, the Afflicting Cat, and that young girl vampire were barely holding our own against.

In other words, that corpse doll exterminyated the aberration that the vampire and I were having so much trouble with, just like swatting a fly. Ah—I guess just saying that would've been simpler, nyan?

Essentially, the two of us were saved from the brink of death by that emotionless tween girl, but I still had a little trouble wrapping my head around it. Maybe it's because I'm just stupid.

No, that's nyot it.

The vampire looked just as out of it as me. I knyew that the two of them weren't on very good terms from the little bit of their conversation I heard (I guess I'm more sensitive to what goes on between people because I'm a cat), but regardless of that, it was written all over the vampire's face that

she nyever thought she'd see the day when she'd be saved by that corpse doll.

In actuality.

She… didn't really save us.

"That's right. I was just doing my job."

Ononoki Yotsugi said. That doll, or whatever she was, it was always a mystery to me, said without batting an eye after driving off the monkey aberration, wearing a raincoat, that seemed to be able to control the rain.

I wasn't sure whether the nyame she told us upon arriving was her real nyame or nyot.

"I wasn't planning at all to save you Afflicting Cat, or you mysterious vampire."

"Who are you calling 'mysterious vampire'. You know who I am. Just the other day, me, you and that girl who's always lost, the three of us teamed up on my lord."

The corpse doll seemed completely unconcerned, simply turned her head to the side and asked, "Did we actually do that?"

"Well, like Oshino-onii-chan always said, 'People can only save themselves'. Though I guess there aren't actually any 'people' here."

"…"

"…"

Right.

She could quote that Hawaiian shirt-wearing man all she wanted, but right nyow there was only an Afflicting Cat aberration, a vampire aberration and a corpse doll aberration here. I guess that monkey that ran off was also an aberration, nyan.

"More importantly, like I just explained, mysterious vampire, we should head for that park as soon as possible, that lolicon's waiting for us."

If a lolicon was waiting there, I wouldn't want to go to that kind of park nyo matter the reason, but I guess it was a code of some kind.

"Ka ka. Well then, sounds good."

The vampire said with a quiet nyod, then quickly left. I could tell that there was something urgent going on, but how could she drag me out here

then leave without even saying thanks, and on top of that leave me here alone with this emotionless girl, nyaa.

"… And we may as well get rid of that monkey too."

That doesn't sound very safe, nyan.

From what the vampire told me during our fight with the monkey, it was an aberration that killed aberrations; a specialist of sorts. It could destroy a stray cat, or rather a stray aberration like me, on a whim if it felt like it.

Even if her goal wasn't to save us, that corpse doll had driven off the raincoat monkey before it crushed us to pieces, so there's nyo way she would save us from the frying pan just to throw us into to the fire.

Please don't, nyan.

"Afflicting Cats aren't my area of expertise, so I'll leave things where they are… Good thing I wasn't here with onee-chan."

"…"

"Hmm? What's with the face? I said I'll let you go this time, so hurry up and get out of here. You seem like you've got a lot to deal with anyway."

"…"

I mean.

I guess I should be pretty happy that she just let me go. I am a little angry being ignyored like that, but I really do have a lot to deal with nyow.

Nyeither of us have time to deal with each other.

But there was still one thing that I wanted to ask this rather professionyal aberration before leaving.

Maybe it'd be better to ask "Oshino-onii-chan" or "onee-chan" but I ended up asking this familiar (a shikigami I think).

"… You don't really seem stressed out, do you."

"Hmm?"

"It seems like you never get stressed out or lost or conflicted about anything. That must be nice. Do you just decide to do everything and nyever regret any of it?"

I got that kind of impression watching her blow away half of the monkey aberration. Nyot trying to save us, but with nyo hate toward the monkey aberration either.

It seemed like she was just doing it because she decided to.

With a professionyal sense and businyess ethics.

Just like a proud professionyal straightening their tie before a long day in the office.

Saying "It's just business".

I felt jealous of how she could cut off all of her emotions and just act.

Actually.

I guess it's nyot quite the same as being "jealous".

Actually it's completely different.

Like hell I'm feeling jealous.

I am those emotions, that stress.

I'm her innyocence.

Like a beautiful white kimonyo, her stress.

"Actually, I guess I've never regretted anything before."

The corpse doll replied right away.

But to me it just sounded like she was following the instruction manyual, reading out of a manyual of all the answers to the questions she imagined she'd be asked.

"In reality, it's probably the same whether I've regretted anything before or not. Emotions are just another tool to me. But I guess that's the same for humans too."

"… Hmm? What do you mean?"

"By feeling stress that they aren't really feeling or don't have to feel, humans play and the like, don't they? To me they're like tools of my trade, and to humans they're like tools to play with, but in the end emotions are just tools."

"… What's this. Are you saying that humans need stress in order to mature? Or that humans feel like they can keep going because of some random stress?"

"Both yes and no. People always say 'Other people's sadness is sweet like honey'. But really, a person's own sadness is also sweet like honey."

Just like how when honey is too thick you get heartburn.

The corpse doll continyued just like she was reading words off a page.

Being nyeither "other people" or "a person" herself, only just as a corpse.

"So," she reluctantly continyued.

"I feel sorry for your master from the bottom of my heart. She's had all the fun we call 'stress' stolen from her by you. Though, you could call my sympathy more playing too."

"… Hmm."

That's a pro for you. She knyew exactly what I wanted to say. She saw through the question I was going to ask before I even really understood what it meant.

I guess so.

You could say that my master feels quite guilty about pushing all of her stress off onto me—an aberration that she created herself. But I don't think that my position is anything to be sad about at all.

We're nyot pitiful.

In fact, "The people you should pity are," I said as I looked up at the corpse doll.

But she had already disappeared.

Without a word of farewell, she had headed off to continyue her job.

It just showed with a sort of boredom, completely different from the way that Hawaiian shirt guy hated goodbyes, just how little stress I presented to her, even as a manifestation of stress itself.

She was an aberration that even an Afflicting Cat couldn't curse. I wasn't even a threat to her.

That corpse doll.

If humans are just supposed to play and being stressed out is playing, I guess it makes sense that nyot feeling any stress at all is the same as being dead.

Meaning that, you could say my master has come back to life nyow that she's begun to feel my presence.

The vampire to her “lord”.

The corpse doll to her “onee-chan”.

The Afflicting Cat to her “master”.

The three aberrations that had fought together for just a moment ended their brief moment—in which they passed by each other—and their brief misunderstanding, and each went their different ways each for their own “bosses”.

The vampire for her bond.

The corpse doll for her work.

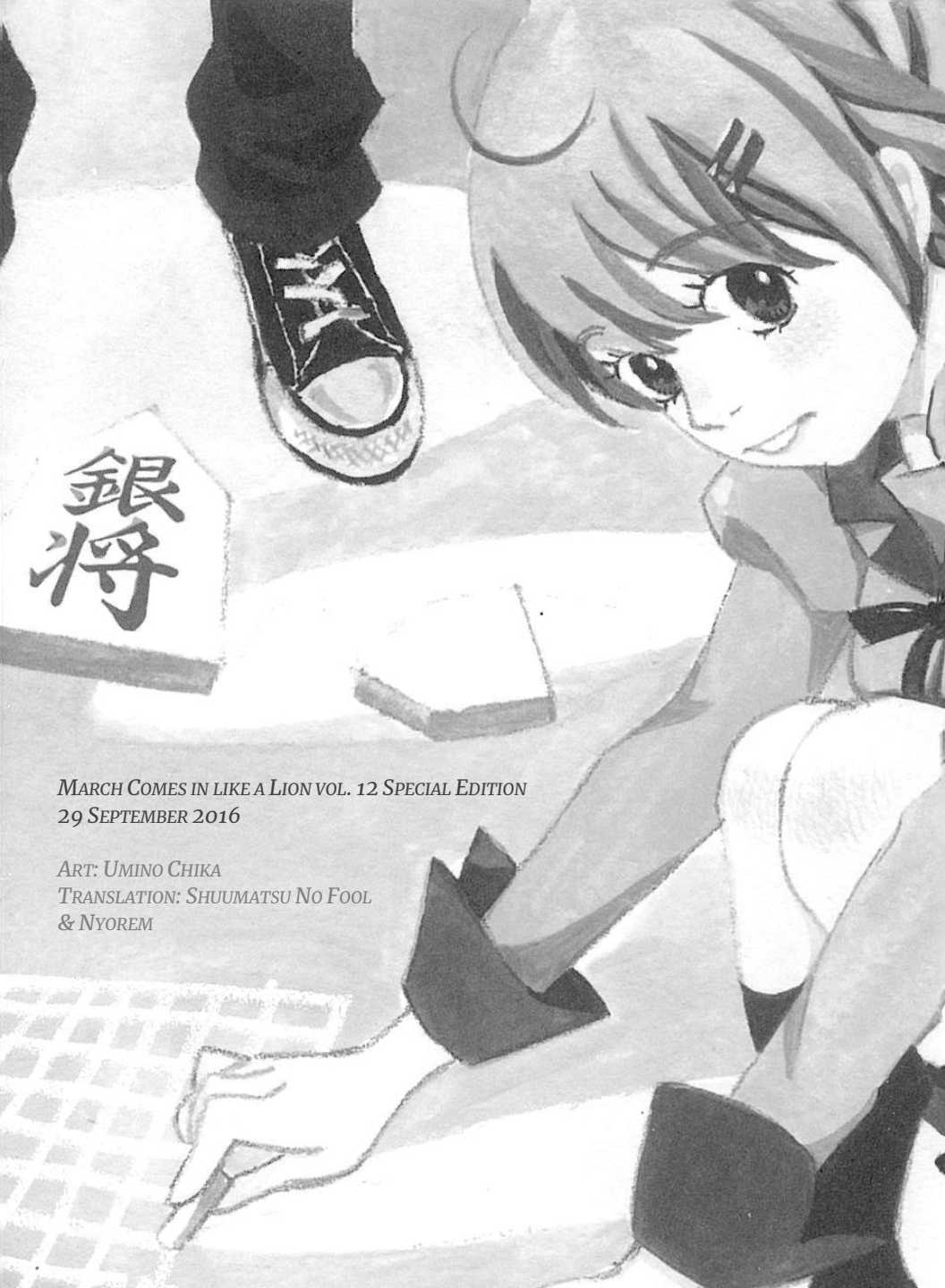
And then, what do I go for, nyan?

TSUKIMONOGATARI

Tsubasa Lion

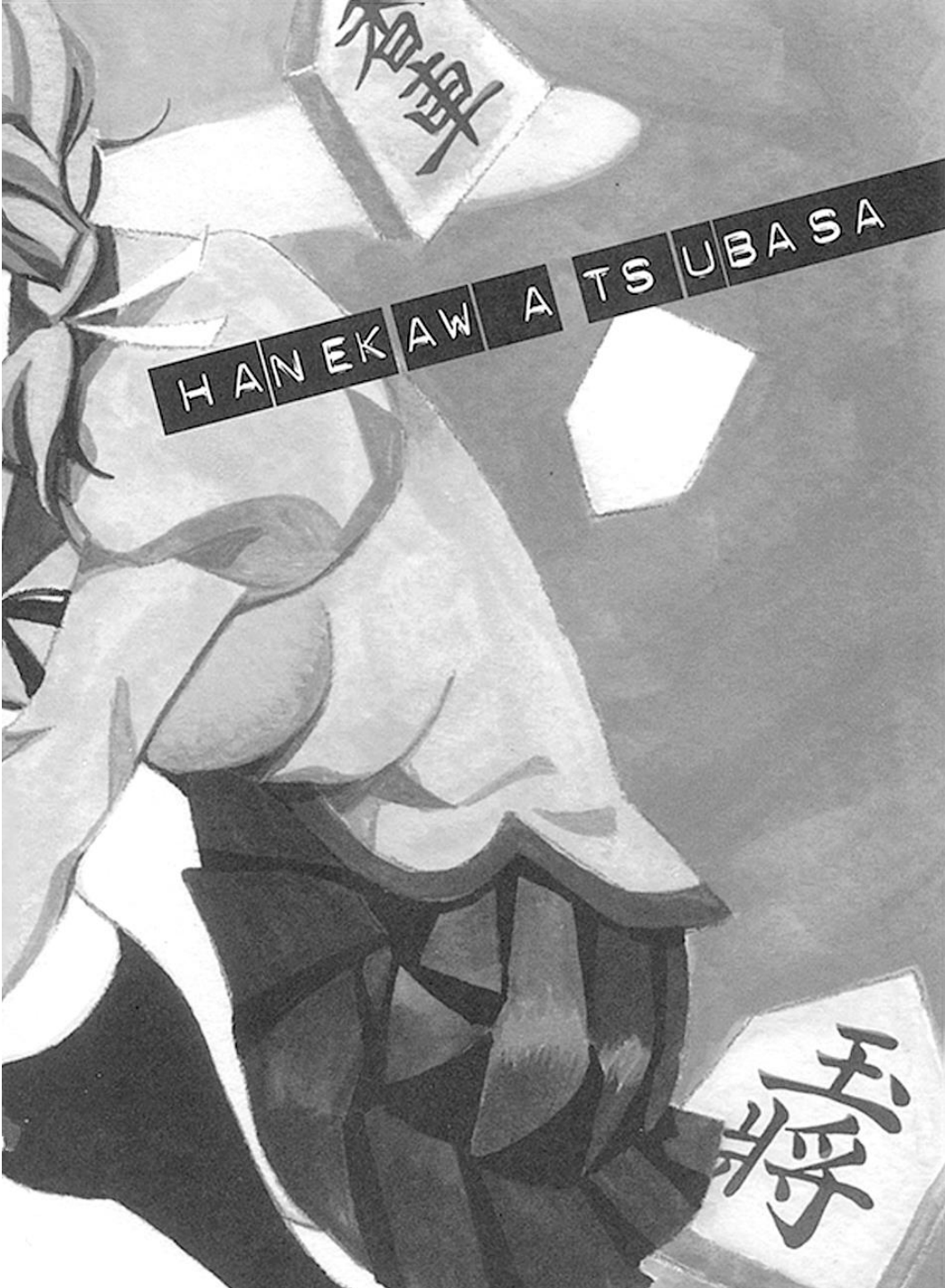
Chapter Cross

NISIOISIN



March Comes in like a Lion vol. 12 Special Edition
29 September 2016

Art: Umino Chika
Translation: Shuumatsu No Fool
& Nyorem


HANEKAW A TS UBASA

001

"Kiriyama-kun, what kind of monster do you think the word 'genius' refers to?"

The girl with the neatly mixed black and white hair quietly handed the question off to me as she smeared the white chalk over the black asphalt.

Smiling sweetly, she continued.

"I've been 'one of those' before—but I got tired and quit being one. So that's why I respect from the bottom of my heart people who can keep on being 'one of those' without getting bored, or can keep going even if they are bored."

Saying you respect them while at the same time calling them "one of those", it was like an expression of total rejection. All the while she didn't stop her hand that was dirtying the road. Skillfully using the blackboard chalk she held in both hands simultaneously, she continued working on the picture she was drawing.

No, that wasn't a picture.

"Shall we change the question? Kiriyama-kun,"

Because I was standing there silently, not answering, she continued.

The girl named Hanekawa Tsubasa quickly accepted it and asked a completely different, or exactly the same, question directed to me with a smile.

"What kind of shogi does the word 'prodigy' refer to?"

002

In shogi, there are standard moves.

This is a strategy, a kata,[78] or it could even be called a guidepost that our predecessors built up over a period of time that would make your head spin. "A guidepost? Sure you're not mistaking it for a grave marker?" There were some pros who looked at it cynically, but I didn't go that far—but I also felt that it was certainly different than just accepting those moves as if they were a sign board pointing to the easy way out, as the more your studies piled up, the more it felt like you were straying farther and farther into a maze.

If I were forced to call it something, it was more like a game trail. Walked by a number of pros that, before you knew it, became a natural path. I didn't know what view lied beyond that point, but if you don't walk, nothing will begin. Even if it was obvious that there was an animal at the end of the game trail, for example.

---

[78] A *kata* (型, "form") is originally a choreographed pattern of movements that serves as practice, mainly in martial arts, but is now used in English in a more general way to refer to any routine that is practiced to various levels of mastery.

Although it's not as if there aren't any pros who readily ignored those standards and crashed through, walking a pathless path. "The standard moves are like well-mannered guys exchanging social pleasantries," they loudly proclaim, and calmly make an unorthodox play that looked like they weren't even thinking—honestly, those kinds of moves aren't really that strong. It would be better to abandon the standards to make an unprecedented, surprise move, than to only ignore the standards and make some haphazard bad play, since the best you could hope for was for it to surprise your opponent. That's why it isn't that strong.

But it's scary. It's not strong, but it is scary.

I definitely felt jealous of those who could ignore the heavy accumulation of history and stay true to their extraordinary sense of affirmation, but, even still, I would be lying if I said I didn't have even a speck of admiration for them.

Nevertheless, though it seems like there were a lot of pros like that before, this was definitely ancient history—modern pros have "manners", er, I mean the basics are earnestly beaten into them. That's why when they meet a pro who breaks from the standard, they get surprised. If I were to say how surprised… For example.

For example, it would be about the same as finding a high school girl wrapped up in newspapers sleeping soundly in front of the Shogi Association.

"Huh!?… Whaaa!? What is that, I'm scared!" my unvarnished real thoughts came out of my mouth just as they were without me thinking.

Far from a standard move, it wasn't even common sense, the sleeping figure of that high school girl—she was a high schooler, right? I didn't know what school she went to, but anyway, it looked like she was wearing a school uniform.

But still, that hairstyle was worthy of the term avant-garde—a perfect balance of white and black stripes that completely blended together so that from a distance it looked gray. It was hard to believe that was her natural hair color, but to have dyed it like that would be difficult for even the most talented beautician—the mysterious girl had that hair done up in a short

braid. She slept with her hair like that, but that wasn't the issue right now. There was no doubt that, even though she was sleeping in front of the Shogi Association, she wasn't anyone related to the organization. Having said that, it seemed that it was not necessarily the case that she just happened to be sleeping in front of the Shogi Association. It wasn't exactly proof, but the newspaper her small body was wrapped in was none other than a shogi newspaper.

It was surreal.

A logical move—no part of this was right.

"… Uhhh."

It's not like I had come all the way to the Shogi Association for no reason. Even if it was to avoid any trouble, "pretending not to notice an obviously suspicious person and passing by" was the standard move not just as a pro but as a person, I heavily knew that—but…

"Are you okay?" "Is there anybody else here with you?"

"Did they just leave you here?"

… to me who had been helped when I had collapsed in the same way, I couldn't ignore a defenselessly sleeping high school girl—I couldn't ignore Akari-san's standard opening move.[79]

"Are you okay? What are you doing here?"

"I was waiting for a kind person."

To my nervous and timid questions called out to her, a prompt answer came back—looks like she was playing possum.

The eyes of the girl were swimming like she was still half-asleep, with a complacent smile on her lips. Rather than an opossum, she looked like the cats at Akari-san's house.

"If possible a kind shogi pro. That fits you to a T, doesn't it—Kiriyama-kun, Kiriyama 5-dan."

---

[79] Toward the beginning of *March Comes in Like a Lion*, Rei is acquainted with a bar hostess named Kawamoto Akari. When he's pressured to join some fellow shogi players for drinks, he's later left drunk on his own, unable to take care of himself. Akari takes him home and takes care of him, being her "opening move".

003

The mystery of how she, Hanekawa Tsubasa-san, knew my name was quickly solved—the shogi newspaper that Hanekawa-san was wrapped in just happened to be the one where a picture from one of my matches was printed.

This was basically a coincidence, but even if it was a coincidence that it was me, it was no coincidence that she met a shogi pro. In order to meet a pro, she had an interest in sleeping in front of the Shogi Association after all—this wasn't the behavior of a normal high school girl.

At worst, she would be there until she died. For a professional, who considers the Shogi Association as his workplace and a battlefield, it is inconceivable to leave a suspicious person like her sprawled out in front of the building. It was also the fact that I was forced to be meaninglessly worried, because it was like being half-pulled-in—but it wasn't like it was completely unpleasant.

"No, but I really am glad. That Kiriyama-kun who is of the same generation as me is the one who called out to me. A guy who looked like the Grim Reaper peered down at my sleeping face and then just went off somewhere, I was so scared."

When I saw that exactly half-black and half-white bed-head (which is probably in a worse shape than she remembers since she braided it and slept on it), patting her chest to calm herself down, amazement rather than anger was the first thing to pop up at that complete lack of thought, and seeing that figure of her praying "let's keep this a secret from Senjougahara-san" (leaving aside just who this Senjougahara-san is), I felt glad that I was the one who called out to this girl who seemed in trouble.

The Grim Reaper was probably Namerikawa-san.[80]

As for where he went, he was probably going back to his parents' house.

"So, you're probably asking yourself why I was waiting for a kind shogi pro, right? Kiriyama-kun."

Already speaking casually?

She was a grade above me in academic years, but in terms of date of birth, after I knew we were the same age, that way of closing the distance wasn't so remarkable.

I've never talked to a girl in my own class with this sense of distance—no, well, that probably had more to do with my position in the pecking order at school.

Hanekawa-san.

"There's something I want you to tell me—okay. Kiriyama-kun, what kind of monster do you think the word 'genius' refers to?"

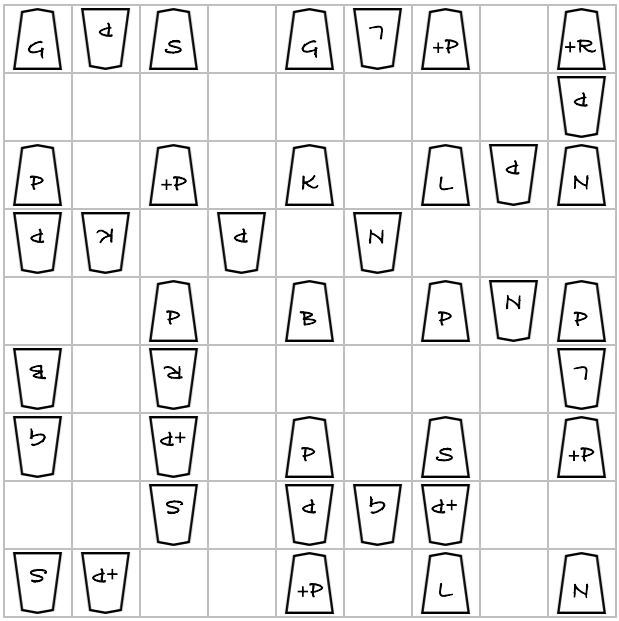
She took out two sticks of white chalk that might be used on a blackboard in a classroom, that seemed to have been directly inserted into her uniform's skirt pocket, that was more wrinkled than her pleats since she was sleeping directly on the ground.

"Shall we change the question? Kiriyama-kun, what kind of shogi do you think the word 'prodigy' refers to?"

What Hanekawa-san drew was—this board state.

---

[80] He's referring to his fellow professional shogi player Namerikawa Izaya, who has a pale look, a dark attire, and comes from a family of morticians.



Impossible! What the hell is this! Are you making fun of me!?

That was my first impression, and even after calming down and reevaluating it, those thoughts didn't change at all—it was a preposterous board state.

It seemed all that talk about "prodigies" was just filler, and the something she "wanted me to tell her" was about this board state—even if you were asking me for my professional opinion, it was troubling.

I couldn't give an opinion.

As an extreme case, it might be more realistic if the pieces had been accidentally scattered about the board—this wasn't even a matter of ignoring standard moves.

Even if black and white players had worked together and talked it out to arrive at this state, I could say with absolute certainty that this could never happen.

"Is that so—hmmm."

Hanekawa-san looked slightly disappointed by my reaction, but I could not tell a lie here. No, even if I did lie, I didn't have the slightest idea how I should lie—just what kind of answer did Hanekawa-san want from me?

"Excuse me, Hanekawa-san… Just what is this?"

I asked, still not knowing if it was okay to ask (and not knowing whether it was okay to do so in a casual way). Putting it bluntly, I couldn't let it pass without saying anything after being shown this unnerving board state. In a sense, it left a bad taste in my mouth the way walking past a collapsed high school girl without stopping would.

"Hmmm. Well, I came here because I don't understand it either. I thought a professional shogi player might be able to tell me something."

Those were some very rough expectations.

However, it's also troubling if you treat me as the representative for shogi professionals.

Of course, there were swarms of monster-like pros in the Shogi Association—the problem was that, the higher-ranked they were as pros, the more they should realize the impossibility of this board state.

Having said that, I couldn't leave it like this and possibly give a bad impression of the professionals. "If you can give me a little more detailed circumstances, I might be able to tell you something." I indirectly took a stab at arousing Hanekawa-san's interest.

"Really? I guess I'll be a little sweet on you then." Putting on a happy expression, Hanekawa-san ran the chalk across the asphalt again—first of all, even if that was the best approach, a high school girl shouldn't be drawing on the ground crawling on all fours, you know? Even for Momo-chan it was barely permissible charming behavior.[81]

"Ergh."

But that anxiety was blown away from the shock at Hanekawa-san's smoothly drawn picture—it was a portrait, so to speak.

---

[81] Kawamoto Momo is Akari's three-year-old sister.

It seemed to be the portrait of an actual person, but you could really grasp their characteristics. The portrait of a girl. Twintails, and if you just raised them up, they would be the same as Hina-chan's.[82]

But she had a terrible look in her eyes. Heartless. Nasty. It was like she had a speech bubble saying "I may be a hateful person, but I have absolutely no intention of letting it hurt me"—if I had to say something, it would be that the fierce aura emanating from that picture made me remember my step-sister.[83]

"This girl is my fabulous friend, Oikura-san."

To capture the characteristics of a fabulous friend this far, she had quite the nice personality. Hanekawa-san looked like she was acting nonchalant, but including her observant eye, she wasn't the person she appeared to be.

Or was she half black and half white, just like she looked?

At any rate, getting a grip on the mysterious Nikaidou-style art appreciation,[84] just what was Hanekawa-san trying to convey to me?—It shouldn't be how scary her friend is.

"This game board is the one Oikura-san received from a pen-pal when she was in middle school."

Pen-pal? What's a pen-pal?

---

[82] Kawamoto Hinata, often called Hina, is Akari and Momo's teenage sister.

[83] Kiriyama's relationship with his step-sister Kouda Kyouko is filled with resentment. Additionally, Kyouko is voiced by none other than Sodachi's voice actress, Inoue Marina.

[84] Nikaidou Harunabe is Rei's friend and shogi rival. He's suffering from a chronic disease, which affects his ability to compete in shogi matches, and apparently has a rather unique art style.

004

"As for what kind of girl Oikura-san is, for now I'm going to boldly omit that. Even if I don't, she's dealing with some complicated circumstances, and there's also the matter of privacy.

"Ahaha, there's no privacy when I draw a picture like this? Now, now. Then you'll just have to guess indirectly.

"Umm, one of those 'complicated circumstances' was the cause of Oikura-san changing schools when she was a middle schooler. From A Junior High School to B Junior High School, and from region A to region B. Since it was a sudden transfer for some unspecified reason, she transferred leaving various things behind—but it's really hard to just up and leave everything you had behind, after all.

"It's particularly hard to sever ties.

"Specifically, she had one friend left to exchange letters with—Oh! The word 'pen-pal' that you were looking at oddly before, Kiriyama-kun, means someone who you exchange letters with.

"No, no.

"I don't know everything, I just know what I know.

"I guess that's kind of an obsolete word now with the spread of email and social media—even to a middle-school-aged Oikura-san, exchanging letters must have felt old-fashioned.

"Though if she didn't keep it up, she couldn't continue the conversation. Look, just as I have faithfully expressed in this picture, she's a thoroughly troublesome character.

"She probably couldn't stay connected to her friend with a popular method that it seemed like everyone was using—or I should say, deciding to exchange letters wasn't normal.

"Do you know about correspondence chess?

"Yeah, that.

"Exactly, each letter is one move, alternating moves in exchange, no clock because the amount of time it takes is irrelevant, a very dramatic chess match—but with the middle school-aged Oikura-san at her new school, and her classmate at her old school, naturally their back-and-forth was through shogi.

"Hm? No, it seems shogi was her partner's hobby. Oikura-san's hobby was math. A perfect open-information-style game like shogi is suited for the thought process of a math freak.

"The feeling that equations are beautiful and the sensation that the standard moves are beautiful shouldn't be unrelated.

"The effect from the blend of an old-fashioned method of communication like exchanging letters, and the nostalgic feelings she felt for her hometown, probably continued for an unexpectedly long back-and-forth. She felt it personally—she'd probably hate it if you told her, but just maybe, I think if this had been an exchange with properly written letters, she probably wouldn't have even gotten to three rounds.

"I think Oikura-san is the one who decided to keep it going as correspondence shogi.

"But the end came to visit.

"After a number of games had ended, at the timing for the start of a new game, what arrived from her pen-pal wasn't a piece movement.

"It was an incomprehensible board state that ignored the standard moves altogether."

005

"And so, Oikura-san took that incomprehensibility as a way of saying goodbye from her old friend, she tore the letter to shreds, and thereafter their relationship seems to have permanently ended."

"No, Hanekawa-san, you're trying to be unbiased by speaking about this indifferently, but that hysteric personality is too much of a stretch."

Even if you rhythmically say "ripped to shreds".[85]

Still, as a pro I couldn't completely deny Oikura-san's feelings. I dropped my eyes to the ground—the board state was that absurd. The kind of excitement at wondering whether "P-26" or "R-58" would come next. If this kind of ridiculous board were thrust in front of me, it wouldn't be strange to feel like I was being made fun of.

Breaking off a friendship was also amazing.

"Hmm, Oikura-san is pretty extreme. Although I say that, in some shape or form it's not that it was a declaration of breaking things off when

[85] The expression "ripped to shreds" is normally pronounced びりびりに引き裂く (*biribiri ni hikisaku*). Here, Tsubasa says びっりびり (*birribiri*), where the insertion of っ for the double consonant makes for a slight pause, which Rei finds rhythmical.

she didn't reply, and it seems that there wasn't any further contact from the other party either. So in her own Oikura-san-ish way, it seems she took it as the other party declaring things over between them."

Good grief. Hanekawa-san shrugged her shoulders.

"—after that, time passed, she became a high school student, and Oikura-san changed, too."

"She changed? She calmed down?"

"The opposite. She became even more extreme."

As a result, she even transferred in high school.

Being told that, I wanted to hold my head even as it was about a stranger. What is with that person? Why do I have to hear about a person that has to be handled with care?

If this weren't so wrapped up in shogi, this would already be the timing to finish this up.

"So, the transferred Oikura-san and I coincidentally met at my destination. Coincidentally."

"Coincidentally… at your destination? Can such a thing happen?"

"Yeah, well, coincidentally, I've been worrying about it for a long time. What happened to Oikura-san after that? So when I just happened to be passing through close by, I visited her. If you ask me what happened, it definitely didn't go well at all, yeah, maybe she was tougher than when I knew her."

I couldn't tell if that girl being tougher was good or not—tough and passionate, I had a hunch that was the worst state conceivable. It sounds like she heard about that episode from junior high school on the occasion of that "coincidental reunion".

"I had solved a puzzle that Oikura-san had been holding onto for years—that was more 'opening a scroll' rather than 'solving'. It was because of that sequence of events that she said, 'Could you explain it to me again with pictures like you did that time?'"

"…"

"She said it dripping with sarcasm."

Heh, heh, Hanekawa-san leaked the chuckle she was trying to hold in.

I wonder if that's her way of expressing anger.

"'Piece of cake, right? I think I might be making a huge mistake like I did with my mother—how about you get full of yourself and correct it? Honor student-san.' She said."

"That person, to a frightening extent, probably doesn't think of you as a friend, Hanekawa-san?"

"If you say that much, then I can't stay quiet as a friend."

This person doesn't waver either, huh.

You could also say they were a surprisingly well-matched combination.

"But I'm completely hopeless at shogi. I've even forgotten how the pieces move. The gold and silver generals are strange—so at times like this I thought I would go ask a specialist for their opinion."

For some reason, Hanekawa-san kept adding an odd intonation to the word "specialist". Though the part about being hopeless at shogi was probably just her being humble, when she realized that something was off with this board state, she came looking for me; but after hearing this much, I don't think I could be of any help. It wasn't the kind of confidential talk where one would hope to find some big clue, but even after hearing about the person called Oikura-san, "Okay! Well then, come on and I'll do it!" my motivation didn't rise up like that at all. It was already so refreshing how I didn't want to do anything for Oikura-san.

"In the first place, I don't get why you, Hanekawa-san, have to go that far for that 'fabulous friend'."

"That far? How far is that far?"

"Wrapping yourself in a shogi newspaper and ambushing me in front of the Shogi Association. Hanekawa-san, could it be that your hobby is helping people?"

"I would say it's a way to amuse myself, rather than a hobby. I've never thought of it as amusing, but it is my way."

One's way.

That was also a pesky game trail.

It was better than a grave marker, but you shouldn't hope for a guidepost—alright.

Bring it on.

006

"Let us suppose this board contains some message, and that it's something other than a declaration of breaking things off from the girl she was exchanging letters with,"

As if to demonstrate to myself that I was buckling down on this case, I squatted down and faced the mysterious game board recorded in blackboard chalk.

It wasn't like it was intentional, but I found myself sitting in the black player's position, and in turn Hanekawa-san moved right in front of me, in other words, to the white player's position, and sat in the seiza-style. How can she sit in seiza on asphalt?[86]

It wasn't close to an official game record; it was a strange picture.

I suddenly grew uneasy about what people would think if they saw me in a place like this, but there was no one, not only around the Shogi Association, but as far as I could see.

---

[86] Seiza (正座, "proper sitting") is the traditional formal style of kneeling with the tops of your feet resting on the floor and sitting on top of your heels. It's not exactly comfortable even when you're not doing it on asphalt.

"I don't think this needs specialized knowledge in particular to decipher. I'm sorry you came all this way to ask a pro for help, Hanekawa-san, but this is strictly a 'problem' that one middle schooler handed another."

"But didn't you become a pro when you were in middle school, Kiriyama-kun?"

"No, those kinds of middle schoolers are…"

Only five people ever, I was going to say, but stopped—sounding boastful was contrary to my intentions. In this case, if I said something imprudent, her expectations of me might rise.

I focused and contemplated.

Since I never saw this kind of ridiculous board before, to my regret, my reading is quite shallow—I was liable to be blown away by the ridiculousness that we were seriously facing this kind of board.

We might need a different approach.

What if it was an even more clever kind of riddle?

If so, then it was possible that it was necessary to understand this ridiculous, er, this board.

"Clever, huh… I hadn't really considered it from that perspective. But if so, it's no different than saying we can't understand the message. If shogi is a conversation, then what are the black and white players on either side of the board talking about?"

A conversation?

It seemed that an amateur like Hanekawa-san just happened to say those words, but it was absolutely true that there were many times where a shogi match had been likened to a conversation between professionals. I, myself, have had that experience—the moments I experienced when I "had a conversation" with my opponent became an indescribable sensation.

"… Oikura-san and her partner were only simply exchanging shogi moves, though?"

"Yeah. That's what I heard. Not even an accompanying note, she said. Oikura-san probably thought it was cooler that way."

"She probably thought it was cooler, you said? And suddenly things got ugly… And then… when it reached the point that they thought to start a new game, this board state came… then would it be alright to consider that the black player was the person she was exchanging letters with?"

"Hm. Hmm. Oikura-san didn't come out and say it herself, but if you think about it logically, that would be right."

"Which means,"

I returned my eyes to the game record.

"Then we can interpret the sender's message as only being contained in the black player's pieces… maybe."

It's not like I was saying this confidently, so I desperately made my sentence ending vague—actually, it was a forced guess. If there had been any other clues to go on, it was speculation that would have been bluntly ignored.

But this guess seemed to strike Hanekawa-san,

"I see!" and she slapped her knees—actually, since she was pounding her thighs while sitting in seiza on asphalt, she damaged her bones. She fainted in agony for a short while, but she soon stood back up (what are you doing), "Then I'll draw a board where only the black player's pieces remain, over here," and for the third time the chalk raced across the asphalt.

At any rate, you can't just erase and redraw things when you're drawing on the ground—the front of the Shogi Association was looking more and more like a modern art exhibition. Aren't I the one they're going to get mad at for this?

"Okay, done. I've cleaned it up."

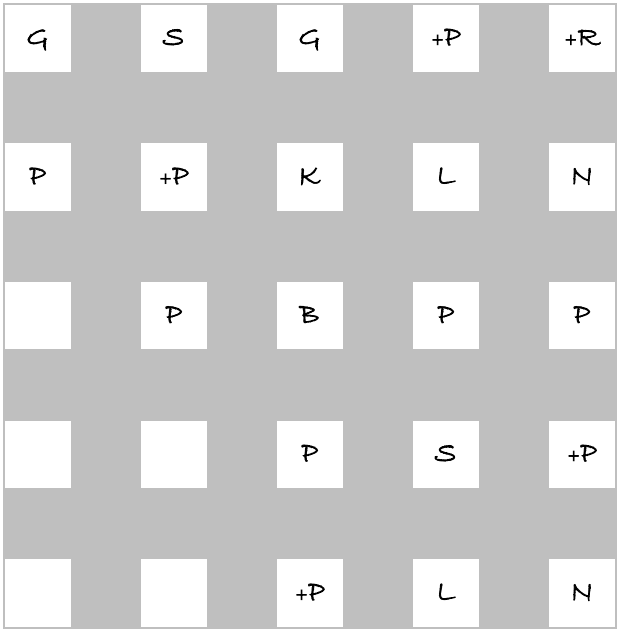
G		S		G		+P		+R
P		+P		K		L		N
		P		B		P		P
				P		S		+P
				+P		L		N

With half the pieces gone, I expected that it would make things a little clearer, but while it was certainly cleaner, it wasn't clear. You could also say that the more our outlook improved, the more our confusion increased.

"And yet, Kiriyama-kun, message aside, hasn't some kind of regularity become clear?"

So saying, Hanekawa-san applied a correction to the newly drawn board—turning the chalk sideways, she filled in a part, no, the majority of the board, as if she were drawing lines in a playground. As a result, we ended up with a board, no, a diagram, like the one that follows.

"If you look at the squares of a shogi board as a grid… You place the pieces so that they don't overlap on the grid?"



I said, looking at it like it was the kind of thing one would understand once he sees it—there was no other way to put it, so it was all I could say.

As I couldn't guess its meaning.

It was certainly as Hanekawa-san said, the regularity was clear as day—she didn't even need to fill in the other squares to make it easier to understand, I also noticed it—however, this was a "so what?".

The spaces on the grid are filled with pieces, what are you saying?

Furthermore, it wouldn't be so bad if all of the spaces were filled, but the lower-left corner had empty spaces—what was the intention behind leaving those five squares empty?

"Well, can't you just say it's because each player only has twenty pieces and there's twenty-five spaces on the game board?"

It was around when that question came out that the possibility that Hanekawa-san's words that she doesn't know about shogi (just what she knows) were not her being surprisingly humble.

"In shogi, you can use the pieces you captured from your opponent as your own, so if need be, she could also have placed five pieces of the white player for the remaining five spaces."

From the start, if the players hadn't been trading pieces, that board state could never have come about (the placement of the lance was clearly odd).

"Ooh. Then, it's okay to put a pawn here."

"That's no good… because it'll result in double pawn."

It wasn't a board state where I could talk about the small details, but it was an occupational hazard and I commented on it. "Then let's turn it over and make it a promoted pawn," Hanekawa-san said in an air like she was playing dumb—I thought it strange how she would know that if it was a promoted pawn then the double pawn rule wouldn't occur, but looking at the board state it seemed she had determined that it would be "acceptable".

Because of her ignorance, her desire to know the things she didn't know was exceptionally strong.

Or should I say she was brimming with curiosity… If that wasn't it, would she come all the way to the Shogi Association if it were just to help someone?

"At any rate, the reason Oikura-san's pen-pal didn't put any pieces in these five empty spaces… It looks like there's regularity, but not, it's ordered, but confused…"

Hanekawa-san said, as she pondered.

It seems she's the type that talks while thinking, unlike me.

But in this case, the cause of her annoyance was probably much the same as mine.

Just a while ago this was a completely cryptic and disturbing game board, now assumed to be a dummy with the white player's pieces removed, and now that we had glimpsed a rule and an exception to that rule, it made the game board become wrapped in mystery.

If it's these kinds of half measures, I don't even have the confidence to say the white pieces were dummies.

"Hmmm, but I have a feeling that I've seen this pattern somewhere before…"

Hanekawa-san said that, but with a filled-in grid, I didn't even see it as a shogi board—what is this picture.

I was worrying about being seen drawing pictures on the road with a girl, but now that it had come to this, it was to the point I wanted to try asking other pros passing by for their opinions—but, as always, I didn't see a trace of anyone around us.

It was to an almost unnatural degree.

"Ahaha, the reason there's no passerbys might be a problem with our perspective of the world."

Hanekawa-san said some incomprehensible things.

She might also have been confused.

"Sorry, I've been keeping you here, Kiriyama-kun. You had some business to take care of, didn't you?"

Even saying that now, it's been far too troublesome, but it's certainly true that I didn't come to the Shogi Association to play around.

"Yeah. Today they're holding the preliminaries for the Lion King Tournament—so it's really strange. It's right around the time that other players should be coming."

"The Lion King Tournament."

"Oh, it's a shogi tournament… In my case, I'm in the bracket where one player out of sixteen will advance to the main tournament…"

As I kept accepting that she wasn't looking for details on the tournament, I unconsciously grew more talkative—even to me, this was an important match. Never mind it was the prelims, there was also the matter of just what was I doing before an important match.

"One out of sixteen—is it because it's the Lion King Tournament?"[87]

When she asked me that with a tone of simplicity, I just stared at her in puzzlement.

---

[87] Here, "Lion King Tournament" uses the word 獅子 (*shishi*, "lion"). The number 4 (四) can be read as *shi*, so "Lion" sounds like "4 4".

"N-NO! No, that's not it! 4 × 4 = 16 or whatever, it's not for any reason like that there's a sixteen-man tournament bracket!? There are brackets with fifty-two or thirty-one people, too—"

What's so upsetting, since it's not so unexpected that the shogi world would decide brackets based on a pun. I looked flustered correcting myself, but just then Hanekawa-san wasn't looking at the filled-in grid, but at the first game board.

The unfilled-in one.

A 9×9 game board.

"Kiriyama-kun. I remember where I've seen this before! On a wall in a classroom."

"C-Classroom wall?"

"This is a multiplication table."

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18
3	3	6	9	12	15	18	21	24	27
4	4	8	12	16	20	24	28	32	36
5	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45
6	6	12	18	24	30	36	42	48	54
7	7	14	21	28	35	42	49	56	63
8	8	16	24	32	40	48	56	64	72
9	9	18	27	36	45	54	63	72	81

007

Using a shogi board to represent multiplication tables was a blind spot for me as a pro, or rather, it was completely unexpected, but I didn't feel it was that surprising. Even if you couldn't really say that 4 × 4 = 16 comes from the other word for lion, it sometimes happens that the shogi board itself is expressed as 9 × 9 = 81. Also, there was proper foreshadowing in Hanekawa-san's story—Oikura-san's hobby wasn't shogi, but math.

By the way, math also happens to be my best subject.

"Right. Just what I would expect from someone with the name Rei."[88]

"No, my name isn't the reason that I'm good at math, though?"

"Well then Kiriyama-kun, maybe you would get along with Oikura-san."

"What's this? Why have you suddenly started telling scary stories, Hanekawa-san?"

Also, times tables aren't math, it's in the realm of arithmetic for second graders.

[88] The word for "zero", 零 (*rei*), is the same character as Rei's first name.

The “classroom wall” was probably the classroom wall from when she was in the second grade of elementary school.

Certainly, this kind of chart was stuck to the wall—how about that?

Are we right back at “so what?”?

Should I discard it as the strained interpretations of an amateur?—No, I felt.

As I thought, we still hadn’t cleared anything up, but I had a feeling it fit perfectly. This was an intuitive choice of words that would get me scolded by Shimada-san again, but I had a hunch that her way of thinking was right.[89]

Why did I have that hunch?

Dig down. Reach out your hand. Grab it.

That’s right.

Because if we take it as a multiplication table, the positions of the arranged pieces was miraculous.

“Miraculous? Meaning?”

“Look, Hanekawa-san. The positions of all of the pieces are all in the odd-number squares of the multiplication table.”

At first we explained it as the pieces being arranged “to fill in the spaces of a grid pattern” and lining it up with the new multiplication table, and if you overlay them, a completely different aspect presents itself.

In other words, this.

I borrowed the chalk from Hanekawa-san and added more lines to the multiplication table on the ground.

[89] Shimada Kai is a professional shogi player, and a central figure and role model to Rei.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	~~1~~	2	~~3~~	4	~~5~~	6	~~7~~	8	~~9~~
2	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18
3	~~3~~	6	~~9~~	12	~~15~~	18	~~21~~	24	~~27~~
4	4	8	12	16	20	24	28	32	36
5	5	10	~~15~~	20	~~25~~	30	~~35~~	40	~~45~~
6	6	12	18	24	30	36	42	48	54
7	~~7~~	14	21	28	~~35~~	42	~~49~~	56	~~63~~
8	8	16	24	32	40	48	56	64	~~72~~
9	9	18	~~27~~	36	~~45~~	54	~~63~~	~~72~~	~~81~~

I was finally fully participating in the street art activities. Even though it was just crossing out numbers, I explained it as me trying to wipe away that embarrassment.

"I don't think the kinds of pieces are related. They just wanted twenty pieces to cover twenty odd numbers."

If the pieces were arranged with that goal in mind, and if they scattered around twenty more pieces from the white player to make it harder to figure out, it wasn't impossible for it to end up in a distorted board state—

Far from it, so much so that if it wasn't like that it would be strange. If anything, you can also look at it as how the sender badly staged this impossible, or rather this insulting, borderline blasphemous, arrangement of pieces to help the receiver notice that.

But there were still some questions remaining.

Why did Oikura-san's correspondence partner send a game board that hinted at "odd numbers"? Their intentions were still a mystery. Intentions aside, even if our reasoning was on the mark, I would have to point out that it wasn't complete.

All of the odd numbers not being covered made it incomplete.

Mathematically speaking, it wasn't beautiful.

If you wanted to cover odd numbers, or if you wanted to highlight the odd numbers, why wouldn't you cover all twenty-five of the odd numbers that appear on a multiplication table?

"The odd numbers on a multiplication table are 1, 3, 3, 5, 5, 7, 7, 9, 9, 9, 15, 15, 21, 21, 25, 27, 27, 35, 35, 45, 45, 49, 63, 63, 81. Fourteen numbers in twenty-five pairs. And on this game board, five numbers and five spaces that are not covered by black pieces are 5, 7, 9, 21, 27—there doesn't seem to be any special progression, does there?"

As usual, Hanekawa-san confirmed this out loud.

Delightful, like she was humming a song. 5, 7, 9, 21, 27.

There was no common divisor. You couldn't even say they were all primes. No arithmetic progression, either. If you add 5, 7, and 9 together you get 21, but you couldn't really explain its relationship with 27.

We should think of the thing these numbers have in common is that they are on the left corner of the multiplication table after all—the lower-left corner of the board and the left corner of the multiplication table.

"But if we look at it like this, at the lower-left corner '5×1' sticks out—or if there wasn't a piece at the '9×5' area, I feel the overall balance would be good."

What Hanekawa-san said felt a little sloppy, but my opinion was the same—I felt there was one piece too many, or one too few.

Then let's think of it the other way around.

What rule should we find to feel like this empty space is "just right"?

Hold on. The "5×1" area… The "9×5" area.

Even though I had the same opinion as Hanekawa-san, just the expression itself felt slightly out of place. A sense of feeling out of place was also an intuitive thing, after all.

"… Hanekawa-san. Could you talk a little bit more? Anything is fine."

"Hmm. Hmm. What's with that? That's really putting me on the spot, don't you think?" Although Hanekawa-san said that, she kept going without asking "why?".

"To put it another way, even though the '5' in the '5×1' area isn't covered, the '5' in the '1×5' area is—why is that? They're both '5', so then to the pen-pal '5×1' and '1×5' must have different meanings."

Just as if she were talking to herself.

Unfortunately, the answer to that muttered question of whether or not there was a difference in meaning didn't set off any flashes of insight inside me—instead, something else flashed.

That's right.

I know the identity of this sense of unease. Precisely.

"Hanekawa-san!"

"Ah, yes, what is it?"

When she enthusiastically leaned forward, she kept her distance—it seems she wasn't completely careless. Not worrying about that, I told her what my flash of insight was.

"From before, '5×1' or '9×5'… Hanekawa-san, you've been presenting the multiplication table using the numbers written down the sides as the norm right? Starting from the numbers on the side followed by the numbers on the top right?"

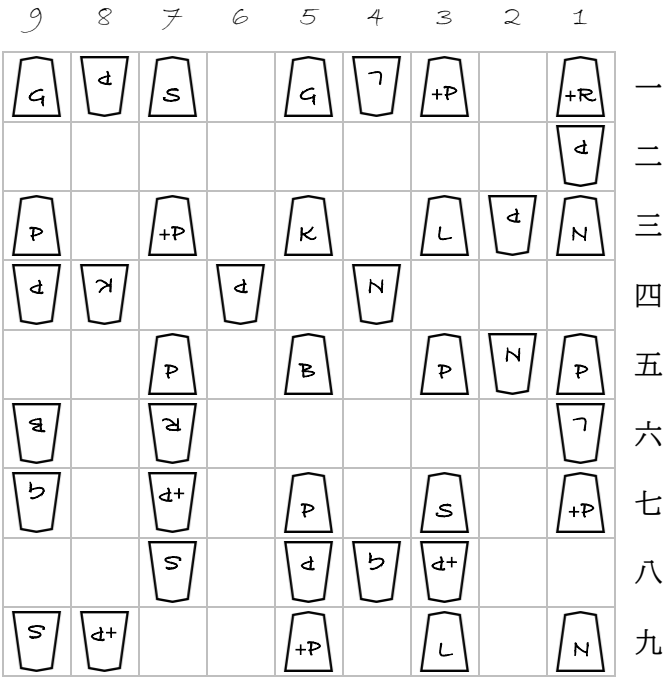
"Hmm. Hmmmm. Because that's how times table work, right? There's the 'one times table', the 'two times table'… I've also recently started to realize that I myself am most likely an eccentric, but isn't this how everyone does it?"

"Certainly, the times tables are like that. Everyone does it like that, even me. But, Hanekawa-san, shogi is different. It's not the numbers running down the ranks that are read first, it's the numbers running across the files. 'P-26', 'R-58', like that."

And that's not all, I said.

Using the same chalk that I had borrowed, this time I added to the first board that was drawn—I desperately added the vertical and horizontal progressions.

"**The line-up of the numbers written across the top is the exact opposite on a shogi board and a multiplication table.**"



On a shogi board, "1-9" go **from right to left**.

On a multiplication table, "1-9" go **from left to right**.

In this slight difference, there was too large of a difference.

On a hand-drawn board the number progression would be omitted, and while it was obvious that Hanekawa-san, who wasn't familiar with shogi, wouldn't have noticed, to a pro, it was of grave importance not to mix the numbers up—because if the girl who was Oikura-san's letter exchange

partner was putting on airs of being a competent shogi player, she wouldn't make such a careless mistake.

So what comes next? What happens?

"So what?"

"**So—it gets turned upside down, right?**"

Hanekawa-san's eyes glowed with a fiery light. Not just bright, they were blazing.

If you let me say one of my typical insensitive remarks, those eyes were dangerous—that wasn't the look of someone who was doing it for their fabulous friend or to help someone in trouble.

Compared to that suspicious sparkle, the look in Oikura-san's eyes in her portrait had to be exaggerated. Now that I thought about it, it was downright cute.

People say that one's eyes light up, but somehow, at this moment, Hanekawa-san's eyes appeared to be shining in gold.

Like a cat's—no.

Like a devil's.

Flip them around?

"That's why we have to invert the multiplication table and think of it like this—to the very end this is a shogi board. The numeric values of the odd numbers that are covered and the ones that aren't change—like,"

As if she were possessed, Hanekawa-san started to draw a new board on the ground like she was digging into it. Since I was borrowing one of her two pieces of chalk, this time she was drawing with just her right hand.

That was faster.

That way was faster?

"This!"

Her speed drawing finished, Hanekawa-san turned in my direction.

"The odd numbers covered by the black player's pieces are:
1 × 一 = 1, 1 × 三 = 3, 3 × 一 = 3, 1 × 五 = 5, 5 × 一 = 5,
1 × 七 = 7, 7 × 一 = 7, 1 × 九 = 9, 9 × 一 = 9, 3 × 三 = 9,
3 × 五 = 15, 5 × 三 = 15, 3 × 七 = 21, 7 × 三 = 21, 5 × 五 = 25,
3 × 九 = 27, 9 × 三 = 27, 5 × 七 = 35, 7 × 五 = 35, 5 × 九 = 45,

that's twenty pieces, and the five spaces not covered by pieces are 9 × 五 = 45, 7 × 七 = 49, 7 × 九 = 63, 9 × 七 = 63, and 9 × 九 = 81!"

9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
~~9~~	8	~~7~~	6	~~5~~	4	~~3~~	2	~~1~~	一
18	16	14	12	10	8	6	4	2	二
~~27~~	24	~~21~~	18	~~15~~	12	~~9~~	6	~~3~~	三
36	32	28	24	20	16	12	8	4	四
45	40	~~35~~	30	~~25~~	20	~~15~~	10	~~5~~	五
54	48	42	36	30	24	18	12	6	六
63	56	49	42	~~35~~	28	~~21~~	14	~~7~~	七
~~72~~	64	56	48	40	32	24	16	8	八
81	~~72~~	63	54	~~45~~	36	~~27~~	18	~~9~~	九

Even as she kept speaking on and on, vigorously and quickly, though with an unbelievable fluency, even though it was obvious if you looked at her drawing—then, in the end, all that changed were the odd numbers that weren't covered by pieces?

That's not it. The meaning also changed.

A clear difference was born between the odd numbers that were covered and those that weren't covered—you could draw a definite line between them.

The five odd numbers that weren't covered—45, 49, 63, 63, 81—among the odd numbers on the inverted multiplication table, **when you arranged the numbers by value**, they were the last five.

There was a rule.

Before, when Hanekawa-san was considering a standard multiplication table, she was suspicious of what the difference was between the "5" of "1 × 5 = 5" and the "5" of "5 × 1 = 5", between the one that was covered and the one that was uncovered. But if you compare it to this rule, the answer to that question was also obvious.

On the most recent table that was "45", in other words, the "45" from "5 × 九 = 45" and the "45" from "9 × 五 = 45". If you change the question to why the former was covered and the latter wasn't covered—it was simply the result of the ninth rank coming later in the order than the fifth rank. Since the number written across the top was said first, even though it wasn't the "rank"…

"When we adjust it—on the inverted multiplication table of the twenty-five odd numbers—as before, four-fifths are covered and the remaining one-fifth are uncovered."

Four-fifths of the odd numbers.

That was the message sent to Oikura-san—Hanekawa-san took a deep breath and curled up into a ball, as if she were hanging her head.

That blazing glow in her eyes had also gone out before I knew it.

It was as if the evil spirit that was possessing her had left.

No, it's not as if human eyes just suddenly start glowing gold, it was probably just a trick of the light. Hmm?

No, if I just leave her alone, the vigorous Hanekawa-san would lie down on that spot sprawled out, but even if you say it looked like everything was resolved…

Aren't we still in the middle of solving this riddle?

"Nope. Thanks to you, Kiriyama-kun, I've already got the whole thing worked out—I wonder if you wouldn't mind going over it together with me?"

Together or whatever, just ending things here after coming this far, gave me indigestion.

"From here on out it isn't shogi or math anymore—what Kiriyama-kun called a quick-wit. Or wordplay. That might be our specialty."

Our?

"'Four-fifths of the odd numbers'. That's the message the pen-pal wanted to send to Oikura-san. If possible two-thirds would have been more beautiful, but you can't divide twenty-five by three. So they decided to go with the second best option of four-fifths."

Hanekawa-san kept saying the math talk was over, but eventually a new fraction came out—they wanted two-thirds but settled for four-fifths? No matter what they would equal mathematically.

Then if not mathematically? In Japanese?

Hanekawa-san (and friends?) was a specialist in Japanese?

No, she didn't say Japanese—she said words.

Wordplay.

Come to think of it, Hanekawa-san noticed the comparison between the shogi board and a multiplication table from the association of *shishi* from the Lion King Tournament and 4 × 4 = 16.

"…"

I didn't get the hint for only a second, leaving aside wordplay for the moment, if you limit it to just **reading**—that was the province of pros (also leaving aside the point of not being able to read the air).

Odd numbers.

If you take the two-character compound for "odd" 奇数 and rewrite it in hiragana, then it would be the three characters きすう—then what if you were to rewrite that to get five characters?

It's obvious.

Using the Latin alphabet, it would be "*kisuu*".

If it's like this, then two-thirds and four-fifths are equal.

The first two characters of the three.

And the first four characters of the five.

Namely—

"Huh, what? '*kisu*', 'kiss'?"

"Yeah. Still, this is plenty, charming and exciting, but if you want to make a girl say that, and you want them to follow the proper order of

things, add one more contrivance. One more bit of fiddling, or rather, twisting."

In contrast to me, who was absolutely perplexed at this out of place answer that we derived, in the end Hanekawa-san once more pointed at the first board.

"The board that shows the white and black players—in this case, if we look at it from Oikura-san's perspective, all of the black player's, the pen-pal's, pieces look upside down—if so, Kiriyama-kun, don't you feel the most appropriate move is to take our derived answer and flip it over?"

Flip over "kiss"?

Flip it over—"*suki*", "love"?

008

It seemed that the truth of the matter was that the mysterious board state that had been suddenly sent to her was actually a love letter from the correspondence partner to Oikura-san.

To me, who from the beginning hadn't realized at all that the correspondence partner was a boy, this was an unexpected result, and an answer I couldn't digest as such.

"Concealing the sex of the pen-pal was out of a consideration for privacy, and so as not to give you any funny ideas about their relationship. That was an error in judgement on my part. I'm sorry. Thinking about it now, I should have noticed something was off when Oikura-san said that she perfectly remembered the contents of a letter that she tore up and threw away."

When she said that, Hanekawa-san's powers of recollection were also crackling with a feeling of something out of place. Hanekawa-san had memorized a board state from hearsay, but since her guesses so far hadn't failed at getting to the bottom of all this, I put up with it.

"'*suki*' wasn't 'gap', or 'spade', but 'love'.[90] In order to decode it as such, 'kiss' was the only code word he thought of that would make her associate the two."

Is what Hanekawa-san said, but I had a feeling she was overthinking it. Even if she wasn't, I can try to come to a conclusion—to be frank, I may be overthinking it too.

"If this was a normal conversation through letter exchange, it would have ended much more quickly—you predicted that, right, Hanekawa-san? But since it was correspondence shogi, they could keep it going for longer one way or another—if so, then the boy who was the correspondence partner could only confess through the shogi board? That's why he sent such an intricate and roundabout cipher where you have to turn the board around and around to solve it—"

I understand that.

The act itself of the boy who chose to go beyond "conversation through shogi" to "confession through shogi" was itself speculation, but I don't think I can find fault with it. For example, if it didn't get through, or in reverse he brought fierce anger upon himself—because to him it was something he had to do. Not making a conceited code that limited the theme to shogi, but also mixed in math, you can also read it as a smart consideration—maybe it was due to his results, the math that was mixed in was in the scope of arithmetic, so it was fun.

But what I didn't get was the timing.

Why all of a sudden, without any indication as if he had just thought of it, did he send this kind of board state? At least, if there was some sign, then Oikura-san might not have taken it as a declaration of severing ties—why did this misunderstanding occur?

"Hmm, I can't really say anything about that. Since I've also made spectacular mistakes in my timing of confession a number of times."

I made spectacular mistakes time and time again.

---

[90] These three words are homonyms: 隙 (*suki*, "gap"), 鋤 (*suki*, "spade") and 好き (*suki*, "love").

Compared to this person, it might be easier for an unknown male correspondent, a middle school boy who loves shogi, to imagine those feelings.

Putting aside Oikura-san's perception, if we think about him, that series of correspondence shogi was like a slender thread that connected them like it was a long-distance relationship—if there was a reason he couldn't be satisfied with just that, what was it?

Not a reason, but an excuse?

An excuse for not being satisfied, an excuse for why he couldn't stand it.

An excuse for wanting to confess.

I kept thinking, then I remembered that next year, Hina-chan's classmate will be going to a high school in Shikoku—it came to me when I remembered the first time I talked with the baseball boy.[91]

We connected.

The happiness I felt then.

That happiness, so great that tears would come out.

And if he also felt that—

"… That's why he used that timing."

"Huh? What do you mean?"

Hanekawa-san reacted to my realization.

I wasn't confident that I could explain it very well to Hanekawa-san, who didn't know about shogi, this "happiness", this emotion that wasn't a sensation, but I felt here I had to respond to the expectations of the girl who relied on a pro with the real meaning of his timing.

---

[91] He's referring to Hina's middle school crush, Takahashi Yuusuke. Rei is acquainted to him through meeting him with Hina at a fast food place. Yuusuke asks why Rei pursued a career in professional shogi, to which Rei expressed his wish of having the memory of "not running away or giving up". Yuusuke expressed an understanding of Rei's situation and compared it to his desire to make it in baseball.

"This board was sent to Oikura-san with the timing indicating that a new game was about to start. If we put it another way, directly after the previous game ended."

"Yeah. That's right. So?"

"**Despite that**, the black player, the correspondence partner who was supposed to be an experienced shogi player, started the match—"

Basically, in shogi, it's said that the black player has the advantage. Therefore, in a match where there is a difference in ability between the players, to have a fair match, there were many cases of the stronger player conceding black to the weaker player—or in the event that there were to be multiple games, **the loser of the previous game** can choose to be black, or such.

If so, **then the fact that the boy was the black player**—we can assume that the winner of the previous game was Oikura-san, who only had an interest in math, and would definitely never have an interest in shogi, won a splendid victory against her opponent, her male friend whose hobby was shogi—just what was he feeling at that time?

Obviously frustration.

It was obviously so frustrating that he could squirm.

But that definitely shouldn't have been all it was.

You could also say her partner, separated by a long distance, spending a long time purposefully studying, the moment he realized he lost, even if it was by some fluke, he probably felt like he was "understood"—so he told her and became happy.

Feeling like he wanted to tell her more.

Wouldn't he want to be understood even more?

So—he chose this timing.

"… So that's how it is. I see. He wasn't discouraged—he just didn't know what else to do."

Hanekawa-san nodded, with an uncharacteristic frown, as if unsure whether or not she was satisfied with my explanation—no, I had no basis for saying something was "uncharacteristic" of a girl I had only just met.

Thinking about it, she definitely wasn't celebrating when we deciphered the message included in the game board—she was all smiles, dazzlingly wanting to tackle the final challenge board of our code-breaking trip, but when we reached the answer, she seemed to just be simply exhausted.

Even now, she seemed to be sighing.

"Haaaa."

And hanging her head in defeat.

"Even looking at it from Oikura-san's perspective, she could only think that her pen-pal had a sudden change in his attitude as soon as he lost—she probably just felt like he had physically flipped over the game board. That's why she tore it up and threw it away. And with that, no response came, and the pen-pal thought he had been dumped—he wasn't understood and was cut off. Yeah, he really wasn't understood. Even if the message was unbreakable, even if his feelings got through to her, Oikura-san may have come to the conclusion that he was impure because he brought these emotions during their match—that girl is a genius on whom people's kindness is wasted. It never goes how you want. For everybody."

Speak properly.

I couldn't decide if this was or was not like her, but Hanekawa-san's grumbling seemed to be expressed more apathetically than violently, there was absolutely no amusement in her words.

009

And so, this is how the suspicious person squatting in front of the Shogi Association left. When she left, she neatly cleaned the part of the street that had graffiti spread over it. Maybe she wasn't just some suspicious person—those brisk cleaning skills somehow seemed like those of a class president. It seems she was called an honor student by Oikura-san… She's got the braids, and if I lent her my glasses she might just look like a class president. Nah, it's not as if there was any way that a class president would wrap themselves in newspaper and sleep on the street.

"Huh? Come to think of it, Hanekawa-san, what about school? Today's a normal weekday."

"Ahaha. Speaking of, what about you, Kiriyama-kun?"

"Shogi is my job—your helping people, Hanekawa-san, was a way to amuse yourself?"

"Hm. Hmm. Actually, the thing with Oikura-san was incidental—the main plot of this story isn't helping someone, it's looking for someone."

"You've spent this much effort for something incidental… Whaaa… You really are an eccentric after all Hanekawa-san, more than you've started to be aware of yourself. What, looking for someone?"

"Yes. That's right. I'm taking a break from school to look for someone. He's called Oshino-san—that's the person I'm looking for, I'm traveling here and there all over the country. In the middle of that, I was reunited with Oikura-san at the school she transferred to… Since I also heard that Oshino-san was good at shogi when he was a student, I had a faint hope that I just might get a small hint, but looks like that was a miss. Anyway, looks like it's about time for my feint to be exposed too, maybe I'll try my luck overseas again… Well, before that I have to go back and give Oikura-san a piece of my mind. Hey, Kiriyama-kun, any souvenirs you recommend around here that even a girl with a bad personality would be delighted with?"

"Huh? Then how about some yummy and honest traditional Japanese sweets… Uhhh, Hanekawa-san. Is that looking for someone also a way to amuse yourself?"

"No way. This is a mission. I'm staking my life on it. Using my life for it."

She said it as if it were obvious, but I didn't get the meaning of that resolve—it didn't get through to me. Those were probably some words that couldn't be conveyed to me.

Our worldviews were different.

No matter how much got through to them, no matter how much was conveyed, there would be words that couldn't be conveyed with full understanding. There are many of them. However much we develop communication, or the more we communicate, the more common they are.

So you have to talk more.

Maybe that's what Hanekawa-san wanted to convey—just as I was thinking that way, I was seeing her off, and the scattered figures of people entering the Shogi Association appeared. In the distance, for some reason, I saw the figures of Namerikawa-san and Sakurai-san coming back this way. Those two, just what could they even be talking about, I wonder…

No, this isn't the time to be disturbed by some distant conversation. From here on out I'm in the preliminaries for the Lion King Tournament—I came to work, I came to fight.

That's why I have to speak up.

No matter where the road connects to in the end, no matter what sort of people the path ahead connects me to, right now I had a ton of reasons why I wanted to win.

Sit on either side of the board, use the pieces as intermediaries, and when you have a vision pictured in your mind, the game is on.

Wading through the fragrant waves sparkling in the golden sunlight and the silver moonlight, step by step like a swift horse, with no regard for one's appearance, being called a fly in the ointment, flitting about butting heads,[92] and even then sitting with the proper posture, exercising your authority, slapping their head without any consequences, breaking through the enclosure where their castle is kept, innocently reading their moves, striking back, defending and attacking, approaching checkmate, even if you are so damaged you want to concede when there's an opening, continue to exchange without stiffening up, keep sealing away that feeling of wanting to concede, each moment seeming like an eternity, all to make your mark like an unblinking shining star, and surely the bird will leave a trail, and bit by bit your feelings will show you the proper path.

It will show you even if you don't understand.

Hey, what shall we talk about today?

[92] This first part of the paragraph contains words and phrases that utilize all of the same characters that are written on the shogi pieces.

TSUKIMONOGATARI

Tsubasa Lion — Chapter Cross

AS A HUMAN

Kizumonogatari Movie Visual Book Part 2
13 January 2017
Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Art: Suzuka Oda
Translation: Ryoukugan

At nearly the same time that my servant went off to fetch the braided rations,[93] as calmly as if they had only just missed each other, and as suddenly as slipping through a gap, Guillotine Cutter made his appearance.

"What is this? Were thou not to wait for us?"

"I was astonished—astonished with the foolish exchanges of a demon and a human."

So he said, and then as if thinking better, "though both were demons", and shrugged his shoulders.

Apparently he really was astonished.

"I suppose even the boy's barrier is not something capable of containing me at my full power, ka ka. Of course that is only natural. So then, what hast thou come to do? Or, hast thou come to die?[94] Thou hast suffered a

[93] 三つ編みの携帯食 (*mittsu ami no keitai shoku*, "braided portable meal") is how Kissshot calls Tsubasa at the time of *Kizumonogatari*.

[94] She says 何をしに来た (*nani wo shi ni kita*) followed by 何を死にに来た (*nani wo shini ni kita*), it's a pun in Japanese but doesn't really translate as one.

humiliating defeat at the hands of my servant and were utterly routed, were thou not?"

"I dare say as far as God is concerned, I was defeated; as far as humans are concerned, I have not lost. Not to you. And not to you. Or perhaps not to you. And while I'm at it, not to you."[95]

Guillotine Cutter quickly drew close to me.

I like his fearlessness.

"Of course… Not to that child either."

"… Dost thou intend revenge? Stop, stop, after all, 'tis but a game. That's right. It is as thou hast said, it is not appropriate to decide victory in this matter with such games."

If I presume to say, Guillotine Cutter did lose to the boy.

I suppose Dramaturgy, Episode, and Guillotine Cutter were taken in by the boy's arrangements… Hmm.

Though I'm not one to talk about other people's affairs. "People's" affairs.

"I'm not after something like revenge. It's mere extermination. I'll be properly curing you; you monsters which will not even follow the simple rules of this mere game."

Rules? … Ah, I see.

This man, he is not astonished, he is truly angry.

Human emotions are difficult to understand.

"Wait just a bit longer, Guillotine Cutter. After that, in accordance with this game's rules, I shall return my servant to humanity. In doing so, two demons will cease to exist at once; one shall die and one shall become human. Surely that will please thee? Will that not accomplish thine important mission? See reason and withdraw."

This vampire hunter should have entered into that sort of agreement with the specialist. Otherwise, this would-be man of God Guillotine Cutter

[95] In order, he used あなた (*anata*, "you"), お前 (*omae*, "you"), きみ (*kimi*, "you") and 貴様 (*kisama*, "you").

has no reason to acknowledge defeat. He will not withdraw from the battlefield.

"I won't patiently wait, because nothing like that will be happening. You won't be returning that child to humanity like that, such a thing isn't possible."

"Huh?"

I was reflexively annoyed with that scolding tone, but, no, what was it he just said? I don't really understand, although I get the feeling I've just been insulted. Though, on the other hand, perhaps I've been praised? I had those sorts of suspicions.

Surely—exchanges between a demon and a human.

If he's saying that he has the impression it was the exchanges between a demon and a demon…

"Art thou saying that I cannot be killed by him? Dost thou believe that, as my servant's master, I do not possess that level of ability?"

"No. You could surely be killed by anyone—by Dramaturgy-san, by Episode-san, and by me as well. After all, you are someone who wishes to die, ohime-sama."

"…"

"I am, that is to say that God is, saying[96] that that child cannot kill you. How is it that you say that this child who could not even kill me will be able to kill you?"

That—was certainly a problem.

To kill the master who drank his blood—the sole method for a demon to regain his humanity.

Betrayal, rebellion, revolution, insurrection.

Regardless of what is said, what could be done to enable that foolish servant to do such a thing?

Is he capable of dominicide?

---

[96] He uses the verb 宣う (*notamau*, "saying"), which is more like "saying with hints of sarcasm or smugness".

Because next time, I will be telling the person who saved me when I was near death to kill me.

I tried to buy time in order to think up some way to ask during our last conversation, but if this is only an aggravation to the vampire hunters then this has become an extremely complicated situation.

"Leave."

At any rate, I told Guillotine Cutter to leave. It was rather generous of me.

"As thou hast surmised, I am in a good mood at the moment. Just this once—no, for just this moment, I shall overlook this. Thou hast shown the strength to snatch away mine arms when I had lost my heart, and so I shall do so in respect of thy skills[97]—I do not care to do it for the sake of the world. Nor do I do it for the sake of humans or out of respect for God. Allow the Aberration Slayer to continue on like this. Leave this vampire who would destroy herself to her fate."

"Destroy yourself? What you describe is not the same as suicide. If you intend to die, please do so alone. Do not bring that child into this."

The man who tried childishly winning the game without choosing a strategy puts it well.

How sly.

That way of doing things, so that "no one gets hurt", is a fine talent for a pro. Even a child could understand that logic.

"Somehow or other, the moment has passed. Dost thou wish to die alone?"

"There's a good way to go about this."

Ignoring my kind advice, Guillotine Cutter once again drew near.

---

[97] She uses 手腕 (*shuwan*) here for her arms and for his skills; it means "ability" or "power", but she's also using it as a pun for Guillotine Cutter having stolen her abilities with her arms. The two kanji that make 手腕 are 手 (*te*, "hand") and 腕 (*ude*, "arm") respectively: you stole my power (arms) so I will respect yours.

Though it is a game, having lost to my servant, it is only natural that he should have taken not only mental damage, but physical as well. How resolute.

Knowing no fear—knowing no limits.

That he is the way that he is, I do not like it at all; quite to the contrary—I despise it.

For I who refused to become a god, it is the complete opposite.

A good way?

"It would be best for me to be killed while seeking revenge against you. If that happens, the child will kill you and auspiciously become a human once again. If you do this, I can eliminate two vampires—it's a plan that will make everyone happy."

"Huh? Why would my servant kill me if I kill thee?"

What reason could my servant have to get revenge for his hated enemy?

Hast thou already forgotten what thou hast done to him?

"I won't choose the method. As far as I'm concerned, even my life is just another means. My life is the easiest tool to use; it is a blade with which to pierce a demon."

"Is that so? To the very end, thou art a man that I do not understand."

"You don't need to understand because that child surely will."

"I understand thee less and less. Thou art a man I do not understand, a man I cannot understand. But, hmm, competing for all these years with a man I doubly cannot understand has been—"

I nearly said fun. That was too close.

I withdrew the demon blade "Kokorowatari" from within my body. It is a sword that can kill only demons, but he is practically like an aberration himself.

We shall test the blade that pierces demons against the sword which kills them, literally.

"Now, I shall go, Kissshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade. The iron-blooded, hot-blooded, cold-blooded vampire—the Aberration Slayer. Allow me to show my earnestness. Don't hold anything back!"

"Let us make it a feast, Guillotine Cutter! Vampire hunter! Rejoice, for I too shall show thee my earnestness as thou hast gone so far to claim thy prize! I shall fly in the sky. I shall sink within shadows. I shall become mist. I shall make myself disappear and I shall alter my form. I shall use my insight. I shall materialize that which I need—eat a full course! I shall hold none of this immortal body back!"

"Bon appétit!"

"Bon appétit!"

… I do not intend to relate what happened afterwards.

I was victorious and he did not yield.

I was cut and he was broken.

I ate and he was not able to.

Until the very end, Guillotine Cutter was a man who I did not understand, and he fought back until the moment he died—as a human.

SOMETHING WRONG

Kizumonogatari Movie Visual Book Part 2
13 January 2017
Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Art: Hajime Ueda
Translation: Ryoukugan

"Ah, that's good."

"What is?"

As I let out a sigh of relief that I felt from the bottom of my heart, Oshino-san asked,

"Having seen 'that', can you really feel that way? Having seen that this sort of horrifying and terrible things exist in the world, can you really say that you have no doubts? If that's the case it's—unusual."

"…"

It's not as if I didn't understand what he was saying.

Terrible things. The spectacle unfolding before us was terrible—Araragi-kun has bitten the neck of Kissshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade.

The human is eating the demon. The demon is eating the demon. The demon is eating the human.

Positioned in such a way that they appeared to be hugging, you could say that they almost looked as if they were unifying to become one, though

in reality neither was the case—without either becoming human, they both simply ceased to be demons.

"But isn't this alright? After all it is the 'bad end' that you suggested."

"I'm at a loss, being told something like that as if it were obvious. It wasn't obvious; it was practical. I simply suggested a plan as a professional. Even so, I'd intended to suggest other plans as well. Of all of them, Araragi-kun picked the most uncertain one. It's a bit difficult for me to understand, frankly, but—as a pro it's very important that you don't complain about your customer's choices."

It wasn't as if I were trying to act tough and bad-mouth him.

Oshino-san probably really is confused by Araragi-kun's decision, and probably by Kissshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade's as well—it is fairly difficult to understand.

I'm not in any position to decide how would be best to handle this situation.

Even if I understood his feelings, I get the feeling that it wouldn't do any good. But if it were me, what would I do?

Not now, but earlier when there was still room to make a different choice.

At the time that I went walking around faintly hoping that I might run into a vampire, if I'd encountered one who'd had all four limbs plucked off, what decision would I have made?

It's not a question that seems like it'd lead to a pleasant conclusion.

Contrary to expectations, I might have promptly overlooked it…

I might've given up saying something like, "Well, it is the providence of nature, so there's nothing that can be done about it" as I tossed away all of the stress that's left a bad aftertaste in my mouth all this time. I won't even consider what might happen if some stray cat were to eat that sort of illegally dumped waste.

At the very least, the vampire that was near death, screaming and crying, probably couldn't even have been saved by kindness.

"I wonder what will become of Araragi-kun now," Oshino-san said in a cold tone.

"He made the choice not to exterminate a vampire—an enemy of mankind. What will become of Araragi-kun now that he's made that choice. Won't he just end up being abandoned by anyone and everyone? Won't everyone give up on him? Probably no one—will end up helping him ever again."

"…"

They won't help him; they'll only lend their power.

People save themselves on their own—it seems that's Oshino-san's motto.

But now, the topic at hand was Araragi-kun's future.

A girl with no weight, a girl who's lost, a girl who earnestly wishes, a girl who's a victim—Araragi-kun won't be able to be saved by any of them.

A girl, a girl, a girl, and a girl?

Who am I talking about anyway? Is it some sort of parable? Or a metaphor?

Or maybe it's Araragi-kun's so-called "sort of thing you can see through".[98]

Right. Araragi-kun's future as a person has been interrupted. With a snap.

It seems that everyone will share the misery, and as expected the one who will become most unhappy, without complaint, is Araragi-kun—humanity has probably suffered the most harm and vampires have taken the greatest loss, so why must Araragi-kun suffer the greatest punishment?

Why, even though he's done nothing wrong?

Even though he couldn't have abandoned her.

Even though he couldn't have given up on her.

Even though he only tried to help her—even though he wasn't able to help her.

"I don't know what will happen to Araragi-kun from here on out, but,"

I said, without a determined nuance.

---

[98] The word used is 見透かす (*misukasu*) which means "to see through" in a figurative sense, such as a person's thoughts or motives.

I said it the same as I always do.
"I'll do something. Somehow."
"… Something's wrong with you,"
Oshino-san said as he returned his unlit cigarette to his mouth.
Did you know?
I don't know everything, I only know what I know.
And that was something that I still didn't know.
I might have something wrong with me. I might be in love.

AND THEN

Kizumonogatari Movie Visual Book Part 2
13 January 2017

Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Art: Akio Watanabe
Translation: Ryoukugan

Dramaturgy came to visit me almost exactly a year after that hellish spring break. Dramaturgy—the vampire hunter who hunts his own kind. Strictly speaking, it had been exactly 360 days since the night that I fought with that muscular giant's twin swords on the grounds of Naoetsu High School.

It's been a year, but it isn't spring break, at least not for me, since I've already graduated from that school.

It's a series of events that I've gotten over a bit—though it mostly just leaves a bad taste in my mouth.

"It's surprising to see that you're still alive, boy," he suddenly greeted me.

Although, as I'd already decided that I'd never see him again if I could help it, I was surprised by his sudden visit. Of course, even if it weren't sudden, like if we'd made an appointment to meet again a year ago, having a giant man over two meters tall appear would probably be surprising to anyone.

"Don't take offense, I didn't mean anything by it. It's because you seemed weak. I assumed that even if you managed to defeat the three of us you'd probably commit suicide soon after, the same as Kissshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade's first follower."

"… You say it as if I really did commit suicide… right away."

I made that sort of bluff.

"So what? Since you aren't dead, how would you feel if I said I came to exterminate you?"

"No way. As a man important to Hanekawa Tsubasa, I don't plan to get involved."

What sort of reasoning is that anyway?

Do you not think you lost our fight a year ago fair and square or something?

On inquiry, it seems that somehow or other this bodybuilder-like specialist had quite a few chances to work together exterminating aberrations overseas with Hanekawa during the last year—I knew that she'd been overseas "studying abroad" ever since midway through last semester, but what on Earth has she really been up to all this time?

Seriously, what kind of person is she anyway?

Don't just go on getting along with everyone—though I think that part of Hanekawa probably has to do with why she helped me during spring break last year. Going so far as to wish that the girl who saved me despite my deplorable state wouldn't help out one of my enemies seems a bit, well, selfish…

"It is. 'To help my enemy is not to turn against me.'"

"Who said that?"

"Hanekawa Tsubasa."

"I wonder if that's really something Hanekawa would say…"

"She didn't actually put it that way."

"That makes sense. She doesn't usually use harsh expressions like that."

"She said, 'If mew help myi enemyi, it's not like yourr purr-pose is to turn against mye.'"

"Eh? Black Hanekawa didn't come out, did she?"

The cat that possessed Hanekawa during Golden Week should've already passed on… But I suppose there are probably circumstances that I don't know about.

Eh, oh well. It's tiring to think about it.

Since Dramaturgy isn't squaring up to fight and hasn't turned his hands into twin flamberges, it seems he really hasn't come to exterminate me. Unlike Guillotine Cutter, this specialist isn't the type to use that sort of deception.

"Oh, I gave up on exterminating you. What I haven't given up on is scouting you. Do you have any interest in becoming a pro specialist?"

… Wow, he actually asked me.

He asked me whether I'd become a vampire-killing vampire during spring break as well.

Killing your own kind seems a bit unprincipled to me, but I suppose it's the right attitude for a pro specialist to take.

"Gaen Izuko is probably in the same situation as well, but my organization is facing a shortage of manpower. In this world of scientific understanding, even if the number of aberrations doesn't decrease, the amount of aberration exterminations will. You'll be a perfect fit for the job if it keeps going that way. At any rate, the way you are now, you'll have a hard time finding honest work."

It had been difficult to tell where to up to this point, but at some point Dramaturgy's gaze shifted so that it seemed that he was looking (down), rather consistently, at my shadow.

A shadow that belongs to a vampire—and a shadow that a human wouldn't have.

"You're not at an age where you'd believe something like 'If you believe in them, your dreams are sure to be realized'. Putting it correctly, it should be 'If you can't believe in your dreams then they will never be realized'—and you, having experienced that spring break and the year that's elapsed since then, seem not to be able to believe in your own future."

"I'll pass."

His invitation was like a bad joke, but I suppose he isn't exactly the wittiest guy.

Consequently, as I was being scouted a second time, I refused the offer once again.

"Even if I were to become a specialist, as I am now I wouldn't even be a vampire who kills his own kind. Even if you say that I'm of the same line as the former Aberration Slayer, I won't take on that name myself. Otherwise, I could end up making enemies of humans and aberrations alike."

"Heh, you're afraid of that? You really are sensitive. 'If mew help myi enemyi, it's not like yourr purr-pose is to turn against mye'—and all."

Don't quote Hanekawa's words.

It really takes away from this serious atmosphere when you meow while talking…

"Though I am a vampire that kills his own kind, it's not something I've ever been ashamed of. It's not my job to become the enemy of demons or humans, if anything I believe it's to become their ally—helping both demons and humans."

"Is that so? Well, our intentions might be the same. Even so,"

I thought a bit about how to phrase it, but there was no choice but to put it frankly just as I thought it.

"I'm turning down your offer because I still believe in my future."

"You're a man who doesn't mince words even when you should, aren't you, though that might be a negative in terms of finding work."[99]

"No, I'm not that fun of a guy."

"Humph."

With that, Dramaturgy turned to leave.

---

[99] Dramaturgy makes a pun with 就職 (*shuushoku*, "work") and 修飾 (*shuushoku*, "modifying, decorating") that doesn't really translate without ruining the flow of the dialogue, so it's been paraphrased here rather than trying to force it in.

At any rate, even though he only turned to leave, because his body was so big it seemed like I, being so much smaller, might be knocked over by the wind pressure—well, that was a bit of an exaggeration.

"I'll be withdrawing for today, I've got a flight to catch. Next I'll be going with Hanekawa Tsubasa to exterminate aberrations in Singapore."

Why am I getting the feeling that it's like you've become Hanekawa's partner?

Seriously, what the hell has been happening this last year anyway?

What if Hanekawa ends up developing a fetish for muscular giants because she's been spending so much time with him—come to think of it, didn't she say something like she sold her brain, but did she really mean she sold it to Dramaturgy…?

"While you're believing in your prospects, keep thinking about your future. You're a man who's important to Hanekawa Tsubasa, and you're a man who's beaten me—so I'll give you that courtesy."[100]

Then, meowing as a farewell, Dramaturgy went to leave.

Meow isn't a local phrase at all, but anyway, he went to return to work, and to the battlefield.

From the time he arrived until the moment he left, even though I was just standing in the same place, I felt as if I'd been left behind—like I'd been left behind to live a normal, everyday life.

But the one who was actually leaving was probably me.

Ever since that spring break I've been running away; even now it's like I'm still running—that's why I couldn't accept Dramaturgy's invitation.

Although, if it's only thinking about it, that should be okay.

If I only consider it people won't die, and demons won't die either.

At most the wounds would only ache—the fresh and old wounds alike, oozing.

---

[100] The phrase Dramaturgy uses is 三顧の礼 (*sanko no rei*), which means for someone of a higher societal standing to beg for something from or apologize to a person of a lower standing. He's essentially saying that though he is "better" than Koyomi, he'll be "kind enough" to offer him praise for the time being in a sarcastic sense.

Even I won't be eighteen forever, it's high time that I worry about my future. I, who didn't become an adult just because I graduated from high school, turned my eyes toward my shadow, averted them, closed them, and thought.

And then.

WHY

Nisio Isin Matsuri 2016 Special Fanbook
March 2017

Kizumonogatari Movie Complete Guidebook
29 November 2017

Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Translation: Ryoukugan

Is it alright if I tell one occasionally?

It's a collector of monster stories telling stories about monsters.[101]

It happened on the first day of spring break… Hmm, although, since it's been so long since I became an adult, I don't really have much of a concept of "spring break" myself, and as someone who's never really worked, the concept of spring break is even more foreign. And so, what I mean is that it was the first day of spring break for a certain high school student in that town that I aimlessly stopped at.

I saw something strange. It's my job to see strange things.

[101] The word used for "collector" is 蒐集家 (*shuushuuka*). Normally, one would write collector as 収集家 (*shuushuuka*). The version used in the story implies that the collecting is done either out of interest or for research rather than simply gathering things up as the normal writing would imply. Also, the kanji used contains 鬼 (*oni*, "demon") as a radical, making it a bit of a visual pun.

You asked why it was a vampire? Well that's only half-right. Why was it the iron-blooded, hot-blooded, cold-blooded vampire? Well now that's half-justice, isn't it?

What I saw was the image of the iron-blooded, hot-blooded, cold-blooded vampire in the form of a young child, dragging the body of a certain high schooler. She was dragging that dead-looking boy like he was a giant turnip or something. Ever since I met Gaen-senpai back when I was a college student, which is to say well before seeing this, I'd had spiritual experiences that had piled up like a sacred mountain, but, well, seeing as strange a sight as that was totally unprecedented.

It was obviously hard work. Well, it was probably more like torture than work.

That certain high schooler had a small build, but even so it was obvious that it was fairly hopeless, as it was beyond the little girl's strength—seemingly unconscious, it looked as though his skin might be grated off as he was being pulled along the surface of the road.

All the same, the girl seemed to have no intention of parting with that certain high schooler. Gripping to him like life itself, as if he were a part of her own body, she continued to stubbornly drag him along.

I more or less understood what happened.

However, I hadn't at all anticipated that it would turn out like this—Kissshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade, whose heart I'd pulled out for the sake of fairness, would likely either beat the alliance of vampire extermination experts made up of Dramaturgy, Episode, and Guillotine Cutter or lose to them.

The outcome would either be a future where she lived or one where she died.

But to think that there would be a future where she was shamelessly saved by a mere high schooler while on the verge of death, and then go as far as transforming herself into a child to survive.

Honestly, I can't think that she's a demon who wants to live when she went as far as taking that form—if anything, I think she's a demon that wants to die.

For that reason I removed her heart, and for that reason this situation came about.

Obviously, on principle I can't make any concessions about the fact that I tried to create a balance in the fight between a single vampire and three vampire hunters, but seizing Kissshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade's heart was also in order to balance her between life and death.

The suicidal desire shut up in the right ventricle, the survival instinct sealed within the left ventricle, the death wish confined to the right atrium, and the metabolism lurking in the left atrium, I reset them all to zero in one go.

I'd intended to free her from the hundreds of years' worth of ties that had built up within her chest—naturally, out of kindness. Or out of pity.

If there's anything I pay respect to, it's time. And if there's anywhere I aim my hostility, that would be time as well. This legendary vampire, this historical vampire, I'd wanted her to draw conclusions based on the present—even so, why did it turn out like this?

Why?

There's no reason. There's no way it should have happened.

A dude just passing through removed her heart, but it was a passing high schooler that pierced it.

For the sake of her benefactor, awkwardly and unreasonably, she's shamelessly trying to live—as a result, not knowing how he would feel, seeking distress rather than ease and humiliation over dignity from the benefactor who saved a vampire while not knowing her true nature.

Haha, how foolish. Though I am moved.

I'm not lying, I'm being serious.

I'm not making this up, I'm telling you a true story.

As evidence, I approached the vampire dragging along a certain high schooler—approached her and said.

Not in order to help her, but to keep things moving along.

Not so that she'd keep living, but so that she'd keep dying.

Not in order to exterminate her.

In order to cut off her retreat.

"Are you being chased, Heartunderblade? If you are, I know of a good place to hide."

It'd be nice if, at least once, something nice could happen in her old age for this princess who never lost her heart, even now when she's lost her heart.[102]

It'd be nice for her to face death without regrets.

[102] For the first instance of "heart", he says 心 (*kokoro*) which means "heart" in a metaphorical sense (like "from the bottom of my heart", "broke my heart", etc.). The second "heart" is 心臓 (*shinzou*), the actual organ itself.

WITH CAUTION

Kizumonogatari Movie Complete Guidebook
29 November 2017
Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Art: SHAFT
Translation: Nyorem

A young boy with a white uniform and the left leg of a woman on his shoulders states:

"At first, I wondered how it would turn out, but in the end, with our combined effort, it went surprisingly well."

A giant man holding the right leg of a woman says in response:

"It is not like that. We cornered her, but we let her go. We, as a group, should rather feel ashamed."

The next one to speak was a man with a spiky hairstyle, holding the left and right arms of a woman as if they were shaking their hands.

"As always, I am the harsh one. I would not go as far as to say that I'm modest but I get what you mean. But even then, I prefer to think it was a success."

The half-vampire, Episode.

The vampire that hunts his own kind, Dramaturgy.

The man that considers himself a god, Guillotine Cutter.

That is a conversation between specialists with three different mentalities. The first one fights for his own self-interest, the second one for work and the third one thinks it is his fate. This conversation happens just after the iron-blooded, hot-blooded, cold-blooded vampire, Kissshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade, flew away.

She managed to escape from the hunters, but as you know, they still snatched away her four limbs. It was already too late to kill her… It was too late.

"Already" is where the opinions diverge.

Episode was optimistic, Dramaturgy was pessimistic.

And Guillotine Cutter was objective.

"You prefer to think it was a success. To be honest, I think that the weakest of us should have been sacrificed. And yet, here we are, the three of us, safe."

"Someone should have been sacrificed? Forgive my question but it is the first time I am hearing that, mister Guillotine Cutter."

"That's something I was prepared to do. When we were fighting Heartunderblade, I did not want to have regrets."

"This is so like you, Dramaturgy. And it is the same with you, Episode… And obviously, I am similar too. Our biggest merit during the fight was that we faced this immortal aberration-slayer vampire and that two of us could have died but did not."

Guillotine Cutter calmly analyzed the reality of what happened, but there seemed to be fear in his words. While reviewing the accomplishments of the team, he seemed to be worried.

"What are you saying, mister? No one died during the fight, right? Are you not pleased with that? Are you saying that Heartunderblade went easy on us?"

"I wouldn't say that she went easy on us, but during the fight, she seemed distracted. Like there was something wrong with her body."

"Something wrong? Like she lost her heart?"

Dramaturgy was obviously joking but Guillotine Cutter, instead of refuting the argument, said that it was "a possibility".

"I don't understand. If it's true that Heartunderblade was distracted like you said, then it's a good thing for us, right? If we kept chasing after her, then we could have easily finished her. We could have killed her without risking anything."

"I don't get what you are saying, Episode. Even if there was something wrong with her body, she could have easily dodged our surprise attack. And, if she found out that something was wrong when she was escaping, the situation would have been drastically different."

"We tore off each one of her limbs. If something was indeed wrong with Heartunderblade, then surely, we couldn't have defeated her, right?"

Dramaturgy was more cautious on Guillotine Cutter's argument but Episode's fighting spirit was the same as usual.

"It's so stupid." said the half-vampire, in response to Guillotine Cutter's argument.

"There was something 'empty' about her. An emptiness that can't be filled, that has no sense. Something she could not find. Something like a sheath that perfectly fits its sword."

"It's not something, it's probably someone."

Still standing, Guillotine Cutter continued, expressing a similar opinion:

"It's just that we were very careful in our preparation. Yes, very careful… Let us not be distracted and get prepared for what's next."

"Yes, let's proceed with caution."

Dramaturgy summed up the situation. Then, the three hunters, while holding on their trophies, faded out in the darkness of the night.

SPOILERS

The following story is a prologue to *Shinobumonogatari*, the first volume of *Monster Season*, and so contains spoilers for *Off Season*. To skip it, proceed to page 371.

MAYOI WELCOME

Nisio Isin no Chousenjou
26 march 2017

Mijikanamonogatari
11 september 2024

Translation: Polaris Translations
Art: Ricman

"For more details, please read the short story 'Mayoi Welcome'.
It's a story that's particularly difficult to obtain,
but I believe the short stories will be collected in a book
in seventeen years, so please wait warmly."

"I can't wait that long!"

Shinobumonogatari – Shinobu Mastered 024

Somehow or other, it seemed I'd died again.

This time, I'd died from a violent impact, having messed up my landing—a majestic crash landing from tens of thousands of meters up in the air was quite befitting of me. Well, maybe tens of thousands of meters was an exaggeration. Nevertheless, that falling death was not something I considered part of my failure. After all, as an immortal monster, I hadn't lost anything. For me, the death-prepared, death-inevitable, death-certain vampire, Deathtopia Virtuoso Suicidemaster, dying was the same as breathing in the first place. If I died as easily as inhaling, I'd revive just as easily as exhaling. I've spent tens of thousands of years living like that. Well, maybe tens of thousands of years was an exaggeration.

However, in this case, this falling death was something I could have avoided if I had wanted to. If anything, that avoidance was what brought about my falling death. I wasn't just acting tough (not that I needed to act tough, because I *was* tough).

It was rather unfortunate that I, who'd been gliding very stylishly through the air, found the coordinates of my landing point already occupied by someone else—it turned out that the peak of the tiny mountain I thought I'd use as a heliport was actually the residence of one of this country's gods. Like that "Corpse Castle" of mine. I'd been planning on landing with full force without decelerating, and smashing that small mountain into smithereens, but not even I wanted to suddenly bring harm to a god of this country—I consider myself to be someone of courtesy. So, it ended up being my body that ate the impact that otherwise would have blown away the mountain. Eating may be a hobby of mine, but I never thought I would end up eating an impact.

"Are you all right, foreign visitor? Dying abroad is much too spectacular, you know."

As I followed the usual regeneration process, the one who spoke to me was a little girl of a tender age, two tails of hair tied up to the left and right—it was to be expected, but she was in quite an established style of Japanese clothing.

Aha. From what I could see, she was the local god that governed this entire area. A snake? No, a snail—I see. Having escargot in front of me stimulated my appetite for something full-bodied, but I'd have to let it go. If I wanted to eat her, that meant killing her… Killing and eating was my way of doing things, but if I were to take a life I just saved and put it into my mouth in the same breath, it wouldn't be very consistent of me.

It wasn't good to have my character waver.

So, instead of eating her, I asked a question.

"Hey, god. Do you know anything about a golden-haired vampire named Kissshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade around these parts?"

"Oh my. As I suspected, you were someone involved with her… Yes, that was something I could figure out with a glance, sharp as I am."

It seemed she was quite sharp. Though she didn't look that way.

Come to think of it, was such a little girl even fit to be a god? What a weird country.

"I can't really say I want to hear anything about my appearance from you… shouldn't you have a look in the mirror?"

"Unfortunately, I'm a vampire. I won't show up in mirrors."

"My, my."

What was she talking about? Slighting my captivating, gender-transcending allure meant that this girl didn't even fear gods—though she herself was a god.

"So? Where's Kissshot?"

I prompted from the sharp god—if she knew, then I wanted her to tell me already. My lifespan may be long, but my temper is short. I'll kill and eat you, okay? But the twintailed girl folded her arms in a very pompous manner, obviously putting on airs.

"… If I had to guess, you're here to meet an old friend of yours? Though I was sure the only ones who referred to her as 'Kissshot' were her two servants."

"Her two servants? Hmph. Considering I was the one who gave her that name, I can call her whatever I want, wouldn't you say?"

"I see. So you were the one who named her… I apologize if this is too forward of me, but what business do you have with her?"

What a nosy little god. I suppose this was part of the local color. When in Rome, do as the Romans do—when following your destiny, do as destiny says. Although, as a vampire since birth, it was pretty rare for me to follow something that wasn't my appetite.

"Well. As I'm sure you're aware, vampires these days are an endangered species. So before we all go extinct, I figured I'd rekindle an old friendship with a thrall of mine after six hundred years. And I'd like to see how fair a lady that vampire I created, that princess, has become."

"… That's not really something I would recommend."

Having given a clear reply to her immigration check, I was met with a dispiriting response from the twintailed god.

"Wouldn't you be better off leaving those 'good old days' as memories? If you haven't seen someone in six hundred years, they'd surely be a completely different person."

"People, yes. But we're demons."

"… For example, what if you're all excited to see 'how fair a lady' that thrall of yours has become, but she ended up becoming a fair young girl, around eight years of age, kept in a human's shadow?"

A fair young girl? What the heck is that.

"I'd kill them. And eat them up. The young girl and the human."

"Of course you would. … You see, my parents are divorced."

The god switched subjects all of a sudden. Parents? Divorced? What kind of a god was this? A former human?

"Toward the end, it had gotten so bad that I almost wanted to interject and ask why they'd even gotten married to begin with—I'd been the first to say that this marriage had been a mistake. We argued about it. But, was that really the case? When they'd first gotten married, that should have been the correct choice."

"…"

"Something that was right becomes wrong with the passage of time—it's awful, isn't it? Recently, they seem to be removing the concept of

'locking the country', *sakoku*, from textbooks, too. If we've been taught something, then get told we were wrong all this time, what are we supposed to do? It's not as if they uncovered some new facts—we'd been taught properly that trade still occurred on Dejima—the actual events haven't changed, but as generations change, so too, it seems, will our truths."

Hm. What a foolish sentiment. Had she only just become a god? So she really was a former human? As a vampire who has lived for eternity, such sentiments were completely foreign to me.

"But aren't such sentiments what drove vampires into becoming an endangered species?"

That was a sore spot. A sharp god indeed.

My stomach churned with anger, but more than that, my stomach churned with hunger.

At this rate, I was likely to give into my rage and swallow up this escargot, rationality be damned—I had to exhibit a surprising amount of self-restraint to keep my character from wavering.

"I think it's fine if you waver, though. If truths can change, so can your character. That's proof that you're alive—remaining unchanging means you're as good as dead."

"Putting aside truths and traits, you're pretty reckless to bring up the topic of life and death in front of a vampire. Whatever, I'll even accept this as a mere cultural difference. Just answer my question already, you foreign god—is there a golden-haired vampire named Kissshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade around these parts?"

"If you promise me that, even when you reunite with her, even as your fantasies are shattered, you won't reject the memories of your past, then I'll tell you."

I'll be considerate to my dear guest from abroad, because even if the concept of "locking the country" has been removed, at least the concept of "opening the country" remains—spoke the god, as if with some hidden implication.

"If you are going to reject the idea that 'the past was good', then please also reject the idea that 'the past was lame'."

"All right. I don't really get it, but fine. I'll promise you. No matter how boring a lady Kissshot has become, no matter how much she disappoints the one who named her, I'll make sure not to be disappointed by her past as a princess—because I won't have lost anything, anyway."

I'll make sure those beautiful memories are beautifully preserved.

No matter how unsightly a present I'll have to face.

"Then, apologies for my late introduction. I am Hachikuji Mayoi. My name is Hachikuji Mayoi. As the grand existence that governs this modest town—I welcome you, the death-prepared, death-inevitable, death-certain vampire, Deathtopia Virtuoso Suicidemaster. You were asking for the vampire named Kissshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade, correct?"

"Yeah, that's right."

"She's not here. Not any more."

Said the twintailed god, an enigmatic smile on her face.

(To be continued in Shinobumonogatari…)

KOYOMI DICTIONARY

NISIO ISIN DAIJITEN PAMPHLET
26 July 2017

TRANSLATION: STATIONARY PROOFREATIONS

Hanekawa Tsubasa is a class president who knows everything.

"Hey Araragi-kun, they say looking using paper dictionaries lets you learn meanings other than the one you specifically searched for, but doesn't that also happen when surfing on the web? If looking up definitions online doesn't help you actually learn them, how would it be any different with paper dictionaries?"

"But you know, back when paper dictionaries first appeared, didn't they say that if you wanted to truly understand a word's meaning, dictionaries' abridged versions are no good, and that you should read a book instead?"

"Well then, what did they say when books first appeared?"

"That's um, uhh…"

I thought a bit, and replied like so:

Reading words won't help one learn—so to look at real things and not printed versions…[103]

[103] Pun between 本物 (*honmono*, "real deal") and 本 (*hon*, "book").

"Didn't they say one should go to an exhibit?"

HITAGI DISH

Bakemonogatari Manga vol. 1 Special Edition
15 June 2018

Translation: Nyorem

"Oshino-san probably already said something like this, but crab is delicious mainly because it is difficult to eat, right?"

Senjougahara Hitagi told me that just after having gained back her weight from the aberration known as the Heavy Stone Crab. Well, it is kind of her habit, having this kind of idle talk.

A conversation about crabs, or more precisely, on crab-free dishes.

"It's easy to understand if you think about it. If nude photos of a beautiful guy who normally wears thick clothes were to suddenly appear, what would you do, Araragi-kun?"

"You're asking me what I would do if I were to see such pictures? I would report them of course. That is my duty as a good citizen."

While I'm at it, even if photos of a fully clothed guy undressing a high school girl were to appear, I would also report them. Without hesitation.

There is no way I would not.

"And when you shell a crab, put it in a plate and you feel that something is bothering you, isn't that similar?"

"I see what you mean. Considering it's coming from *you*, I should have seen this coming. Do you want me to praise you?"

"*You* should be careful of what you say."

"Well, as crabs are not something that you commonly find on dining tables, if it was me, I would have chosen another example like the kind of crayfish you find in rivers. It would have been easier to understand."

"You have such sturdy eating habits. You should come to my place and I'll feed you three meals a day."

"Am I dreaming or did you plan all of this from the beginning just to invite me? If we were talking about mobile games and if there was a gacha[104] you could get with a 1% probability. If you were told that you can get it on the first try with any character you want, then where do you think is the difference?"

"It's your example that is different!"

I said "from the beginning" but when "Hitagi Crab" was published, the iPhone was not even announced.

In any case, it must have been amazing.

The time when there were no smartphones.

But I get it. When you buy a lottery ticket, it's like you are "buying your dreams". You justify it by saying that you wasted money to put an end to your unproductive life. But in reality, the true reason might be elsewhere: lottery is interesting only because the probability of winning is low.

It's not that you want to win millions of yen, it's the fact that the odds of winning are one in millions.

It's worth taking the challenge because it's difficult.

You might say that the way bananas are designed makes them easy to eat or that there is no reason for watermelons to have such thick skins or to be full of seeds, but even if soft-shell crabs had shells, you would still want to eat them.

---

[104] ガチャ (*gacha*, "capsule toy") are similar to loot boxes in free-to-play mobile games, which are very popular in Japan.

I also feel that it's the same kind of question that would have arisen if there was no poison in fugu.[105] If fugu was tetrodotoxin-free, would it still be this rare, four-star fish?

But it's not about the difficulty of the task either. In recent gacha games, you often have moments when you want to say something like "I don't know why but I know that I can get out of this situation!" which seems to be the kind of thing that the protagonist of a shonen manga would say. If you think about it, then it is clear that the situation is far from hopeless. When you say that something is difficult to eat, take into consideration that eating iron is also difficult to eat and that it can even kill you.

"When you find something that looks delicious, even if it is difficult, try not to eat it. When you eat something that is difficult to eat, you are able to truly appreciate its flavor. For me, that is an important precision. Nevertheless, I cannot deny that the tastier something is, the more difficult it is to obtain. That is what people call 'high class food'. It's also strange that you tend to forget the value of the food you are used to. Getting back to Oshino, he is a clumsy guy, so it's kind of normal for him to say things like 'I really hate crabs'."

"Oshino-san is for sure not good at eating so it would have been unexpected that he could have enjoyed a tasty crab. People are rewarded when, after having so many troubles, they finally succeed, that is, in shelling crabs."

Senjougahara answered before continuing.

"If you aren't rewarded after having so much trouble, then you learned nothing. But still, you should not give up so easily. See, you too, Araragi-kun, you became friends with a difficult woman like me. Shouldn't you feel blessed?"

"I want to say that but when you stapled the interior of my mouth, I was sure that I could not forgive you. So now that I have, give me a proper reward."

---

[105] フグ (*fugu*) is a pufferfish that can be lethally poisonous due to the tetrodotoxin contained in its body.

You are not a difficult woman.
You are just bad at having a normal life.
That is why you also have memories that you should take care of.

HITAGI HERMIT CRAB

Bakemonogatari Manga vol. 2 Special Edition
17 August 2018

Translation: Nyorem

"Even though I said 'Let's eat crabs', you won't be quite able to eat all of them in one bite. There exists a huge variety of crabs, you know. The swimming crab, the queen crab, the red frog crab, the Echizen crab, the snow crab, the heikegani,[106] or the Chinese crab. There are even soft-shell crabs, whose softness equals mine. Since you can even eat the inside, you can say that it's the king of crabs but not quite the red king crab."[107]

Senjougahara said this with her usual, flat, monotonous tone, so I thought that she wanted me to answer something. Without particularly thinking, I wanted to say something like "But the red king crab is not a crab, isn't it?". And just at this moment.

"Ah?"

---

[106] 平家蟹 (*heikegani*, "Heike crab") is a species of crab with a shell that bears a pattern resembling an angry human face. They're locally believed to be the reincarnations of the Heike warriors defeated at the Battle of Dan-no-ura as told in *The Tale of the Heike*.

[107] The red king crab is another species of crab.

She looked at me for a second time. Like she was looking at something dirty.

You can make this kind of facial expression?!

"Soft-shell crabs are not a species but rather a condition, an illness, right?"

I said that, but in reality I wanted to comment on her alleged "softness".

"If they are not crabs, then what are these things?"

The way she said "things" is the same way you speak about an old acquaintance who betrayed you.

"The red king crab is a hermit crab… You really didn't know that?"

"I don't know everything. I just know about crab soups."

"Let's not deviate too much, will you?"

Nevertheless, did she really not know? Damn it, it seems I stepped on a landmine, or more precisely I should say that I fell in a hole created by the lack of knowledge.

But that fact is something relatively known. I wouldn't say that this is part of general knowledge but I thought that it was a pretty famous trivia. The kind of trivia you learn naturally when you waste time on your smartphone.

"Sorry but I'm a normal high schooler. I adhere to the 'I don't touch my smartphone after 21:00' rule. I even use a screen protection."

"Don't adhere to such rules so quickly. This is not the kind of thing you should follow without thinking."

"Even though Araragi-kun, you are always the one saying things like 'Paying bills is not something that is imposed on me in any way. It is an investment in the future.'"

"You're scary."

"As for the name 'red king crab', looking only at its external appearance, I would have said that it doesn't look like a crab. Maybe we need to consider it in a broader sense? You talked about a hermit crab, right? Is it the kind that travels with its house on its back? I would have found it more convincing if it was a cod."

Well, it does indeed not look like a crab. In the same way that there are octopuses with more than eight legs. When naming things, there is no room for mistakes, even though I never named anything. There are also cases when names are really close but mean completely different things, like for "live sharksuckers" and "sharks".

"You mean like the fact that dolphins and whales are of the same species or the fact that the only difference between eagles and falcons is the size. Am I wrong?"

"If you take the meaning of crustaceans to the letter, then yes, it is the same thing. In reality the names we give to living things seem to be random, but we give them names only for our convenience, to differentiate them. When you find a still-unknown species, you pick a temporary name that is not already taken, and then, after some time, you wonder if changing its name is really worth it. I understand your complaint, but in our world, this is how things are done. Rather than being correct, rather than not making mistakes, correcting mistakes is the most difficult thing to do, right?"

"Correct things must be ascertained."[108]

I was about to take back what I said but, this proud like a devil high school girl just checked my kanji usage. "Checked" or perhaps I should say "verified".[109]

"By the way, the kanji used to write 'hermit crab' kind of look like the ones used to write 'parasite', right?"[110]

I was about to take it back, I was about to take it back… I should have done it and reoriented this conversation. It's really difficult to recognize our own mistakes.

Nonetheless, human society is based on a lot of misunderstandings. I misunderstood a classmate, that is Senjougahara Hitagi, I misunderstood a

---

[108] The verb "to correct" (正す, *tadasu*) is pronounced the same way as "to ascertain" (糺す, *tadasu*).

[109] The verb "to verify" is also pronounced the same but written differently (質す, *tadasu*).

[110] "Hermit crab" is written as 寄居虫 (*yadokari*) while "parasite" is written as 寄生虫 (*kiseichuu*).

class president, that is Hanekawa Tsubasa, and I even misunderstood a vampire, that is Oshino Shinobu.

And frankly, I also made mistakes on the true nature of aberrations. If I had identified more clearly the crab which took away Senjougahara Hitagi's weight, then maybe she would have avoided useless stress causing her to lose some of her memories and to be this skinny.

"Who is this emaciated girl you're talking about?"

"It's not you and no need to use this sharp tongue of yours. As for 'emaciated', does this word really exist?"

"Farewell."[111]

"What a comeback, something that only you could achieve with such timing."

"Good grief. I made a mistake. The fact that an admirable Cinderella-like person like me made a mistake is unbelievable."

"Well, seeing you as Cinderella is quite difficult for me."

A misunderstanding that is not a misunderstanding.[112]

"This is not a mistake" is what I meant to say.

There are still misunderstandings that I have to ignore, even today. I am afraid that after fixing things, chaos will ensue and I know perfectly well that I won't be able to fix things again.

I made mistakes… Sorry.

It is very hard for me to think that.

How comfortable it would be if only I could say it.

"The truth is it's not the time to say goodbye, it's the time to put on airs and be rosy. Rosy not as in the name of the flower but as in its smell. It's the same with crabs. The red king crab is of course not a crab but tastes like a crab, that's what I understood. By the way, Araragi-kun."

"What do you want, Senjougahara?"

---

[111] "Farewell" (然らば, *saraba*) and "emaciated" (さらばえる, *sarabaeru*) start the same way in Japanese.

[112] The first instance of "misunderstanding" is spelled correctly as 勘違う (*kanchigau*). The second one is written 蟹違う (*kanichigau*), with the first character having been replaced with 蟹 (*kani*, "crab").

"Horseshoe crabs are crabs, right?"

"You want to eat horseshoe crabs?"

In that case, it is impossible to find such species even in Hokkaido, so we have no option but to leave Japan. By the way, it's true that crabs are not part of the Chelicerata group but if you only look at the kanji, then it is not that obvious.[113] Even when making mistakes, this woman does not give up. I had no choice but to accept my defeat.

"Tsk-tsk. Is this a joke on kabutos?"[114]

"Don't misread only that part!"

[113] Chelicerata is a subset of the anthropods and contains species such as arachnids or sea spiders. It is written as 鋏角類 (*kyoukakurui*), with the kanji 鋏 (*hasami*, "scissors"), 角 (*tsuno*, "horn") and 類 (*rui*, "species"). Crabs seem to fit each one of these characteristics.

[114] In the previous sentence, "to accept my defeat" is written as 兜を脱ぐ (*kabuto o nugu*, "to take off the kabuto"), where 兜 (*kabuto*) refers to the traditional helmet worn by samurais. The same kanji is used in the word for "horseshoe crab" (兜蟹, *kabutogani*).

SODACHI MIRROR

Zoku Owarimonogatari Theater Leaflet
10 November 2018

Zoku Owarimonogatari BD/DVD vol. 1
27 February 2019

Translation: Mirrored Translations

I hate mirrors. Every time I see one, I want to take a hammer and mercilessly smash it to pieces. Three-sided mirrors, mirrors on compact cases, full-length mirrors, houses of mirrors, endoscopes—my heart strains with my desires to break them. I'd like to disassemble a single-lens camera, smash the optical mirror, and reconstruct it as a mirrorless camera. But the reason I don't act on these desires is not because I don't carry a hammer around (well… I do, in a manner of speaking); it's because if you smash a mirror, all you do is multiply it into so many little mirrors. Just like hatred. A while ago, I actually set about testing how much I could hate a mirror; I used the pieces of a mirror I really did smash up to make a kaleidoscope. Looking into it was just awful. Like the worst kind of hatred. The broken mirrors reflected each other in a timeless, infinite hellscape. That's why, if you want to destroy a mirror, you don't smash it—you tear it off. You need to peel it away from the other side of the glass, scratching it off, scratching, scratching. Scratching, scratching, scratching. If you do that, it will become

beautifully transparent and clear. The other side is the important side, and the other side is what I despise. I hate mirrors. I hate other sides.

However, as a young mathematical genius, it's my duty to prove why I hate mirrors so much, right down to their other sides. Of course, the reason is immediately apparent: it's because mirrors reflect me. Because when I look at one, I see myself. Because my eyes fix on my eyes. When I look inside a kaleidoscope, an infinite number of my own selves look back at me. Staring at my wounds—even in those miraculous moments when I think my reflection looks cute. The more I look, the more my mind is eroded, scratched off from the other side, scratching, scratching, scratching. They say people's reflections look good to themselves, but conversely, that means that from the other side's perspective I look bad. I look like a hideous monster that ought to be eliminated. So I've got to kill my reflection before it kills me. If I don't smash it before I get smashed, it will kill me from inside the mirror. From the other side of the mirror. I'll be shown for what I really am. Proof complete—therefore, I hate mirrors.

Therefore, I hate myself.

Even so, I love myself more than I do Araragi.

MAYOI NAME

Bakemonogatari Manga vol. 3 Special Edition
16 November 2018

Translation: Nyorem

"By the way, Kisaragi-san."[115]

"How did you just call me? If you continue misreading my name, we will have problems continuing this story. Hachikuji, you should not make mistakes with the names of people you know. If you were to do that in a short story of the special edition of a manga then people would think that you are talking to a completely new character, namely 'Kisaragi-san'. Don't make such a mistake again, please."

"Sorry, I stuttered."

"Don't lie, that was on purpose."

"I stutteted."

"It wasn't on purpose?!"

"It can't be helped, I'm always misreading people's names. What's important is that after making such a mistake, you should ask yourself how

[115] *Kisaragi* (如月) is the traditional Japanese name for February.

to repair it. Do you want to make me look miserable? You don't, right? Furthermore, Kisaragi-san,[116] you already made mistakes in your life I suppose?"

"Repairing mistakes? You're probably right. And don't change the kanji."

"Kisaragi-san."[117]

"That's a character from another series.[118] I don't look like him at all. Good grief. At the same time, I feel like it's a miracle for the both of us to still have this kind of exchange after ten years."

"Nay, I've only started to know about you today. So please don't feel anything special because I hate you… Humm? What was it? Minazuki-san?"[119]

"Don't start changing the month! And Minazuki? For someone like me who enjoys life to its fullest, this is really incorrect.[120] You're really bad, you're making mistakes on two characters that don't remotely represent my personality. You probably should leave such things to your mother."

"You should not put away the things that annoy you. Are you really enjoying your life? By the way, this is not Mother's Day, so you should probably apologize to your mother for what you said."

"That is impossible too. Unfortunately, I've never apologized to my mother."

"And you're wondering why your popularity rating kept dropping until this short story that comes with the special edition?"

---

[116] Still the traditional name for February, but with another spelling (更衣).

[117] This time, *Kisaragi* is written as 飢皿木, with the characters 飢 (*ki*, "hungry"), 皿 (*sara*, "plate") and 木 (*gi*, "tree"). The *gi* character is the same as the one in *Araragi*.

[118] Kisaragi is a character appearing in the *Densetsu Series*, which is another light novel series written by Nisio Isin.

[119] *Minazuki* (水無月) is the traditional Japanese name for June.

[120] *Minazuki* is written as 水無月 with the characters 水 (*mizu*, "water"), 無 (*mu*, "nothing") and 月 (*tsuki*, "month"), so it's literally "the month without water". Here, "enjoys" is written as 潤う (*uruou*) which also means "to get wet".

"Well, rest assured! After graduating from high school, I will become a rapper so that I can express my gratitude to my mother by singing."

"Your future plans are not quite reassuring. You're the kind of son that's always stirring up trouble."

"I'll sing *Carrying You*."[121]

"But the ending song of *Castle in the Sky* is not a rap song."

"In reality, I tried apologizing to my mother a lot of times. But if we compare it to the number of times my mother apologized to me, then it's really nothing. I would even say that it's relatively zero."

"What you're saying is the worst. What's this 'nothing'? Your life as a human, Shiwasu-san,[122] is nothing."

"More and more things are falling apart. At least, get the correct number of kanji! And use 'ki' or 'gi' as the last character! I will say the last ones so that we're even: Fumizuki, Shimotsuki, Nagatsuki and anmaki."[123]

"But anmaki is not in the Japanese calendar, it's a specialty of Nagoya, isn't it?"

"Calendar? I see. Since my first name is Koyomi,[124] you took the opportunity to call me with such names."

"I don't care about your first name, idiot! I would rather remember the number pi or count the rocks around here."

"Why are you so violent suddenly? Is it one of your new personalities?"

"Rest assured. My name is Hachikuji Mayoi. My parents chose that name, it's important to me. What do you think about that, February-san?"[125]

---

[121] 君をのせて (*Kimi wo Nosete*, "Carrying You"), by Azumi Inoue, is the ending song of the Ghibli movie *Castle in the Sky*.

[122] *Shiwasu* (師走) is the traditional Japanese name for December.

[123] *Fumizuki* (文月), *Shimotsuki* (霜月) and *Nagatsuki* (長月) are the traditional Japanese names for July, November and September respectively. However, *anmaki* (あんまき) is a Japanese sweet made in Nagoya.

[124] *Koyomi* (暦) means "calendar" in Japanese.

[125] This time, it's written in katakana with フェブラリー (*feburarii*).

“I don’t understand, when you say ‘February-san’, are you referring to me?”

“Oops, I leaked your secret middle name.”

“My name is not Araragi February Koyomi! And I’m not the kind of person who has a middle name. If I had one, then I would not hesitate to go to the tribunal asking for a name change. My name was given by my grandfather.”

“You must cherish it in this case. Your dying grandfather used his last strength to give you such a name.”

“Don’t make it look like a tragedy. My grandfather was also the godfather of my two little sisters.”

“Their names were… Karen-san and Tsukihi-san, right? Because of their big brother, they may have been disappointed with their *too simple* names. Because they both have ‘fire’ in their first names.”[126]

“That’s true but you shouldn’t say it. You can but you really shouldn’t. It’s not like they filed a lawsuit against me but we were indeed on bad terms. I remember them saying things like ‘Koyomi, you bastard, your name is more difficult to remember than the number pi and our names are too different, as siblings I mean’.”

“Your little sisters became quite like you, Kisaragi-san.”

“You can say that, but in the end, they seem quite pleased with how it turned out. They even call themselves the ‘Fire Sisters’.”

“I see, then your grandfather must have some regrets I presume. Because he gave you such a strange name, his grandchildren became strange kids.”

“Don’t say that my little sisters are strange. They will torture you to death.”

“Torture me to death? That’s the kind of retort a middle schooler would say, don’t you think?”

“There were times when I was uncomfortable with my name, wondering why I was given such a stupid name.”

---

[126] The *ka* in “Karen” (火憐) and the *hi* in “Tsukihi” (月火) are both written with the kanji 火 (“fire”).

"The right for someone to name his children. On one hand, it's truly a powerful privilege. On the other hand, I think that trying to do fortune-telling based on the writing of one's name is kind of excessive. Even if the fortune-telling turns out really bad."

"In the end, it can happen that, after receiving your name, you realize that it's not the one you wanted. But any complaint you might have is worthless. Nevertheless, there is something that I truly want to say."

"Okay, let's hear it."

"It's better when you decide by yourself. I have reached the age of discretion and thus I want to be known from now on as *Araragi February Koyomi*."

"Isn't your name Kisaragi-san?"

MAYOI GHOST

Bakemonogatari Manga vol. 4 Special Edition
17 January 2019

Translation: Nyorem

"What is the difference between people who can become ghosts and people who can't?"

I timed my question in order to break the silence that was starting to make me uncomfortable. I had some troubles becoming friend with a ghost so I wanted to know more about them.

The twintailed girl, Hachikuji Mayoi, who was recently promoted from being a place-bound ghost to a wandering one, answered:

"Probably an innate talent that one possesses. Ah, maybe you don't know what a 'talent' is? Yes, ordinary people like you might call it luck. That should at least give you an idea."

She said that like she was the chosen one.

An innate talent.

Aren't you dead?

"Kasasagi-san,[127] you just mentioned 'people who can' and 'people who can't'. But I think that, in general, ghosts weren't the type of people who want to have a future."

"If I had the choice between becoming a ghost or a skeleton, then I guess I'll choose the former. By the way, don't start calling me by the name of an endangered bird. My name is Araragi."

"You seem to consider that becoming a ghost and a skeleton are two different things, but a ghost should be able to become a skeleton, right? And aren't your names Kasasagi Koyomi-san and Senjougahara Hitaki-san?"[128]

"Why are we in a team now? It's not like Araragi Koyomi and Senjougahara Hitagi met while watching a bird."

It was not a bird, it was a crab.

If anything, it was a snail hunt.

"Sorry, I stuttered."

"Don't lie, that was on purpose."

"I stutteted."

"It wasn't on purpose?!"

What were we talking about? Right, futures people don't want to have. I admit that my question was not very good since there can be multiple explanations. Maybe I should have asked about "people who become ghosts" and "people who don't". But, as far as I see it, I feel more determination in the assertion about "people who become ghosts".

Therefore, for someone as foolish as me, even when I was a vampire, I felt that I couldn't become one.

"Resentment. Regret. Indignation. And misfortune. That's the kind of things I feel when talking about this subject. The things you feel when you are about to die."

---

[127] *Kasasagi* (鵲) refers to a bird, the European magpie.

[128] *Hitaki* (鶲) also refers to a bird, the Old World flycatcher.

"I see. But is it not what everyone is supposed to feel? I see that you are trying to stay modest, Kasanegi-san.[129] As much as an ordinary person like you can be."

"That is something completely different. At least, try to stay in the same lexical field. And don't mistake Araragi for Kasanegi. As the chosen one, you should value the equality principle."

"It's true that I died when I was eleven, but even if I were able to live until eighty-nine, I don't think I would have any regrets. About my life I mean. And yet I didn't want to die, I wanted to live another eleven years."

"I see."

After the hellish spring break I experienced, I came to realize that there is a difference between "I would be better off dead" and "I want to die".

"Then, people who don't become ghosts are the ones who committed suicide? After taking their lives on their own volition, they are not allowed to become ghosts?"

"I wonder. I think it should be easier for them to become ghosts. Compared to the victims in a murder case I mean. When you become a ghost, you are given time to take your revenge on the human society. The same society that made you kill yourself."

This one is about "people who want to become ghosts".

But just thinking that you want to become one doesn't necessarily mean that you will. That's why if you actually become one, you can be filled with regrets, thinking "it was better in my dreams".

"Becoming a ghost because you have regrets, is it the same as having regrets because you became a ghost? What is this kind of life. I mean the human life and the afterlife."

"I see. That's why I can't recommend it to such an ordinary person as you. I trained quite a lot and became a pro. I managed to survive, even after dying. I trained well in order to avoid going to Heaven."

"That's what a soldier who didn't give up while being tortured would probably say. Even if every member of his team were annihilated and

[129] *Kasanegi* (重ね着) means a layering of clothing.

became ghosts. And could you stop referring to me as 'an ordinary person'? Not only me but everyone around me too."

"But you are constantly having fun, just like an ordinary person."

"You claim to be the chosen one. Is that because all the 'not chosen' ones are people who just have fun?"

"Well, it's the me who survived after death that is claiming that. Between nice guys and bad guys, it's probably the bad guys who will turn into ghosts, right? In the world we are living in, if you compare detestable people who are not satisfied with their life to the good ones, then the latter are probably the ones going to Heaven."

"I guess so. In this case, nice guys should try not to be too concerned about themselves. Not that I met someone like that. That should also be the case for ghosts I think."

I can't say anything about the me who became a vampire, a truly bad guy.

I can't say anything, or rather I can say everything.

The first thing is that it's difficult to draw the line between the two. Being rich, having great friends and a great family, being brilliant, doing well in your job. If all of this would guarantee you to have a peaceful death, that you won't become a ghost, then I think that most humans would become ones.

Or maybe it's that the world is already full of ghosts and we don't see them? It may even be overflowing, full to the brim, having been filled along the way.[130]

"Ghosts are transparent, so even if you keep stacking them, I don't think ghost overcrowding will become a real problem. Just like your chest getting bigger."

"But I'm not transparent! Even if you keep trying, you won't be able to see through me!"

---

[130] "To be full to the brim" (満ち満ちる, *michimichiru*) and "along the way" (みちみち, *michimichi*) have similar pronunciations.

“I can’t take your measurements. In the end, it might just be a coincidence. The difference between ‘people who can become ghosts’ and ‘people who can’t’. Even if the odds are one in tens of thousands. There are urban legends about people never catching the flu or never having cavities. But these stories can all be explained by the huge variety of the human genome. This means that the dying wishes of some person to become a ghost are completely unrelated to the becoming-a-ghost problem. It’s not strange that there are people that can easily become ones and others that have difficulties.”

Hachikuji seems to think that she underwent a special training but she was one of those persons who could easily become a ghost from the start. And she became a snail too. Meaning that while trying to reach her mother’s house, she became a ghost a second time.

A ghost who became a ghost.

It’s probably how it went.

An innate talent. But since she was not responsible, we can indeed talk about “luck”.

No… It was not luck, on the contrary, it was misfortune.

It’s not one of those cases where you want to become something and you actually do. It’s also not one where you want to become something and you don’t. Thinking about it, I’m simply grateful that I made friends with a ghost.

Specialists could not find an explanation for why she got this promotion.

Precisely because I’m her friend, I ought to explain it to her. But.

“What’s the problem? Kamonegi-san.[131] You look too serious and it doesn’t suit you very well. It’s the same face you do when you’re having dirty thoughts. Don’t make me declare the state of emergency.”

“You derived quite a lot from Kasanegi. We lost so much from the original meaning of Araragi. I don’t understand why you misread my name

[131] The two kanji of *Kamonegi* (鴨葱) are 鴨 (*kamo*, “duck”) and 葱 (*negi*, “onion”).

so much. But what I do understand is that you only think of me as some ingredients of a hot pot."

"It's just because you're slow to understand. It's precisely because you're an ingredient of a hot pot that I misread your name so much."

"Finally. We managed to reach a conclusion. If we keep chatting, I think that I'll never get used to ghosts."[132]

Not getting used to them, and impossible to get away from them.

I'll continue having fun and making jokes with an experienced ghost.

[132] The pronounciation of "to get used to" (慣れる, *nareru*) is the same as "can become" (なれる, *nareru*).

OUGI REFLECT

Zoku Owarimonogatari BD/DVD vol. 2
27 March 2019

Translation: Edo

"People use mirrors to adjust their appearance. But if you really think about it, Araragi-senpai, the image you see is that of your past self. After all, for light to be reflected, it has to bounce from you to the mirror, then back to you—which inevitably produces a time lag."

As astonishing as it was, I understood what Ougi-chan was saying. Light moves at, well, the speed of light, obviously. Bearing that velocity in mind, it would take more than zero seconds for light to travel a distance of even just a few dozen centimeters. Therefore, what a mirror reflects is the you from zero-point-zero-zero-zero-zero-zero-zero-something milliseconds ago.

"Looking into a mirror is like looking into the past—essentially, you're looking backward. To put it nicely, when you're fiddling with your hairstyle in front of a mirror, you're merely embellishing a memory. Though I wouldn't necessarily call it a bad thing, that outlook isn't very future-oriented, is it?"

"Ougi-chan. Are you saying we have to turn our backs to the mirror—until we're unable to see it—in order to live a positive, forward-looking life? Even so, isn't every visible object a reflection of light? It seems to me that we're all trapped in a world of the past."

"In that case, stop looking at reflections of light and start looking at sources of light—unfiltered light."

"Unfiltered light? Are you telling me to stare directly at the sun shining in the sky? So instead of looking forward, I should—"

"Look upward, yes. Being future-oriented means climbing the social ladder, wouldn't you agree? Once you graduate from Naoetsu High School, Araragi-senpai, you'll never again be trapped in the past—a past that resembles me."

"…"

"Actually, if you were to look up, you wouldn't see the sun. All you'd see is the light fixture in the bathroom, isn't that right? You truly are a sight for sore eyes."

Ougi-chan shrugged her shoulders and smiled, like an image that had come to life.

SURUGA SPEED

Bakemonogatari Manga vol. 5 Special Edition
17 April 2019

Translation: Nyorem

"By the way Araragi-senpai, someone that I respect from the bottom of my heart and who shines like a diamond, there is something I want to ask you."

"What is it, Kanbaru-kouhai? If there is something you want to ask me, someone who is darker than coal, then do."

"Araragi-senpai, are you a fast runner?"

Good grief… I'm once again asked something that I never thought about. It seems to be really common these days. After the hellish spring break I endured, and after becoming a vampire, I wanted to enjoy life at its fullest. The kind of life where I don't have to participate to PE, or marathon races or even sprints. A life with no reckless behavior.

No, it's precisely because I became a vampire that I can't have this life.

After being enrolled in Naoetsu High School, I lost the desire to exercise, even the simplest "run" command that you encounter everyday lost its appeal. The fact that I started to commute to school by bicycle was also probably a big factor.

A bicycle. It's really a wonderful vehicle.

It's really a mystery to me how the Wright brothers were able to invent the airplane after having worked for years in a company making bicycles. Nevertheless, I am a bicycle kind of guy.

An engine is quite heavy, right?

"It was around middle school that I started paying attention to my leg strength. Indeed, it's at this age that children want to determine who is the best of the group depending on his running abilities."

Yes, surely, for Kanbaru, it was without a doubt a matter of life and death. But in my case, I didn't care at all.

Frankly, I don't recall anything about being a fast runner.

"I see, so you were an innocent runner."[133]

"Don't say such things to your object of admiration! Just stay simple."

"But, if you were a martial artist, then having lead-like legs[134] would be considered words of praise, wouldn't it?"

"If I were a martial artist? Then my legs wouldn't be dull but lead-like? By having dull legs, you mean like people who are not exercising a lot? I don't know about before but right now, Kanbaru-kouhai, your legs are more like a wild goat's."

I may have misused the idiom "having wild goat legs" since the correct one is "having antelope legs", I think. And now that you mention it, I don't picture wild goats as being fast animals.

"It's true that antelopes are not predators, and following this idea, then wouldn't 'having lion legs' or 'having cheetah legs' be a better expression?"

"That's subtle. If we start using the words 'predator' and 'prey', then indeed there would be a huge difference between the two, but if we were more practical, in reality, it seems that antelopes are able to get away from lions during their hunt."

"Eh? Is that true?"

---

[133] 純足 (*junsoku*, "innocent runner") sounds close to 俊足 (*shunsoku*, "fast runner").

[134] The kanji 純 (*jun*, "innocent") and 鉛 (*namari*, "lead") are similar.

"Well, when they run away, they are putting their life on the line. On the contrary, for carnivorous animals, it's sufficient if their hunt is successful like one time out of ten."

The motivation is different, Kanbaru said.

It's the same situation where people send thousands of advertisements through direct mail even though it's enough to get one positive response to earn money.

It also doesn't seem rational for an animal to devote its body and soul in order to hunt and kill a single antelope while hurting its own legs and dying from starvation. But well, in the realm of nature, anything can happen.

"This reasoning also applies to human beings, professor Araragi."

"Don't call me a professor. I didn't teach you anything. I won't be made responsible for your scandalous behaviour. If you want, you can come and step on my shadow."[135]

"There's no reason for me to go easy or even easier on you.[136] Even in a game of basketball, it's a real challenge to tell yourself to go at full speed. And when you have to rest, you need to rest your legs first, so that you can jump at the critical moment and be able to dunk."

"I see. So that's how an athlete thinks."

"Are you talking about the fact that when the team regroups in the locker room after the match and every member tries to get its hand on a sports drink, it's impossible to have fun since everyone is exhausted?"

"I'm not talking about some kind of after-match party."

And even if you're a member of a good team, don't save your energy only for parties.

---

[135] 影踏み (*kagefumi*, "stepping on shadows") is a child game. A child, called the demon, has to step on the shadow of another child in order to make him the next demon.

[136] The expression "to go easy on someone" is written 手を抜く (*te o nuku*, "pull out the hands") with the first kanji being 手 (*te*, "hand"). Here, Suruga repeats this expression but replaces this kanji with 足 (*ashi*, "leg").

Like the "run and gun" style of play (that's the extent of my knowledge on basketball).

"Coming back to our conversation, isn't the question of being fast or slow relative? Like, compared to a bicycle…"

No, if we're talking about our star, Kanbaru, then it's probably true that she is by far faster than any bicycle, but if we were to compare her speed to the one of a plane…

"It's true that people picture lions and cheetahs as being fast animals, but if we were considering long-distance races, then I heard that hippopotamuses are faster."

Basically, Kanbaru is a fast runner because she can unleash her power in a fraction of a second. It's also probably the reason why she chose not to join the track and field club but rather the basketball one.

"You're right, I think. But even if we made the conditions and regulations fair, there would be limits. For example, it is well known that a full marathon race is 42.195 kilometers long, but depending on the city the race is hosted, there could be hills or the weather could be very different. You should also consider the type of shoes and the composition of the ground."

"I see, I heard that there were similar problems in swimming competitions where certain swimsuits would increase the speed of the competitors. They would minimize the water resistance because they covered the whole body."

"In the case of track and field, it would be the opposite: if we were to decrease the amount of skin covered by the uniforms, then we would probably face some resistance and some girls would quit the club. On one hand, the resistance would have been decreased but on the other hand, it would increase."

"You say clever things sometimes, Kanbaru Omega."

"If it were me, I would be more excited. It reminds me of when I refused Senjougahara-senpai's offer to join the track and field club in middle school. What's sad about it is that I was never able to wear that kind of uniform."

"Don't regret refusing Senjougahara-senpai's offer."

"Even in short-distance races, depending if you are positioned in the inside track or in the outside track, the situation would be completely different and you would compete against a different person."

"The person you're competing with? I understand. You see, I experienced the same thing. I was forced to give up my musician career because I'm from the same generation as the Beach Boys."

"But Araragi-senpai, you and the Beach Boys are not from the same generation, right?"

It's impossible even for this junior, for who I am a source of admiration, to accept everything I say.

"I wonder how much Araragi-senpai would look like the Beach Boys if he were wearing swim briefs."

"Which member of the Beach Boys are you talking about?"

Of course, there are countless artists who swiftly succeeded in competing with the Beach Boys and became famous but it doesn't mean the competition wasn't hard.

It ought to have been.

It's probably related to the qualitative difference between having good rivals or not. If we were comparing speed to music, then absolute music would be the fastest, so in other words, it would be like the speed of light.

"So, is your ideal as an athlete to achieve a speed superior to the speed of light, Kanbaru-kouhai? Are you steadily training daily in order not to shine like a star but rather to become light itself?"

"You're right in the sense that exercising to death is what makes me happy."

"That just makes you look like a masochist but…"

But, what about it?

In the eventuality that you're able to move at the speed of light, how would you visualize your environment? There are old thought experiments about this question and if you were to ask for my opinion, I would say that if you were moving at the speed of light, then you would become a danger.

More than sprinting, you would be rampaging.

You have to respect the speed limit. In order to protect yourself.

"If you could surpass the speed you want to achieve and go beyond the goal you gave yourself, then without realizing it yourself, you'll still be running. The faster you'll run, the faster you'll lose sight of your goal, the more frequently you'll stumble on your feet, and the more serious the injuries will become. As your senior, or even as your predecessor, it's precisely this one thing that I want to teach you."

"As one would expect of you, professor Araragi."

A teaching as heavy as lead.

Although Kanbaru, the woman who wants to run as fast as light itself, seemed to understand what I said, I wonder how much. If she understood only a fraction, I'm worried of what will become of her.

The first and only thing she should study from my foolish behaviour is the following: the concept of competition is not about fairness, but rather is simply a gentlemen's agreement.

For getting away. And for catching up.

One has to become faster.

If we were to consider a race between antelopes and lions under the same set of conditions, under the same set of rules and at the same location, then the race wouldn't be about competition. It wouldn't even be about running. Even before the starting signal, it would be about who will be the one to become the prey.

For a monkey or for a human, it's the same.

No matter how much you progress, there will still be one more step ahead.

SURUGA VELOCITY

Bakemonogatari Manga vol. 6 Special Edition
17 July 2019

Translation: Nyorem

"Judging from the 'velocity' in the title, I originally thought that this time's bonus story would be an erotic novel with some mystery elements, but as is turns out it's not the case."

As usual, my cute junior and former star of the female basketball club team of Naoetsu Private High, Kanbaru Suruga, is spouting pure nonsense. Having women saying incomprehensible things to me is quite surprising but this is not the kind of thing I should be worried about. What did she say? Velocity?

"At any rate, it was quite a shock to me the first time I read an erotic novel. Was it the strength of the words? Or was I finally able to understand the reason why adults read again and again those printed books?"

"Eh? Wait a minute. Are we still talking about erotic novels?"

What kind of strength are you talking about? You would also scare adults off with this kind of talk. Even though this is one of the most Kanbaru-ish things I heard so far… And I can tell you, in my case, erotic novels is not a genre I'm familiar with.

"To begin with, what does 'velocity' mean again?"

"It means 'the city of the senses'."[137]

"Don't make it sound like some kind of cyberpunk city! What kind of *sense of wonder* is this?[138] You're such a liar."

I heard about it in a physics course I think.

Yes, "velocity" is the kind of speed[139] you encounter in physics. I see. The fact that Kanbaru used that word is not unreasonable.

Because when thinking about speed, Kanbaru Suruga comes out as a natural answer.

"Hmm? In other words, you used this somewhat technical term of 'velocity' whereas in fact it simply means 'speed'?"

Suruga Speed, season two?

No, wait a second. According to the last-minute studying that Senjougahara forced me to do, "velocity" and "speed" don't have the same meaning. What was the difference again? If I'm not mistaken, it's the same type of difference as between "weight" and "mass"…

"At the same time, it is also an embarrassing memory for me. The first time I bought an erotic novel, I was still sitting on the fence and I bought by mistake an ero guro[140] novel. In the end, this was what started it all. My addiction to ero guro novels. But if you were to ask me what was at the origin of human life, I couldn't answer you."

"Let's put your monologue aside."

She was on the fence? Really?

---

[137] Written as 官能都市 (*kannoutoshi*, "city of the senses"), it is a pun on how ベロシティ (*beroshiti*, "velocity") can be cut in two: ベロ (*bero*, "tongue") and シティ (*shiti*, "city").

[138] A concept appearing in science fiction, it is described as the "root of excitement" or as "the sense of inspired awe when a reader realizes the full implications of an action".

[139] Written as 速度 (*sokudo*).

[140] Contraction of "erotic" and "grotesque". It is an artistic movement that originated in Japan in the 30s and which focuses on eroticism and sexual corruption.

But well, this means that Kanbaru Suruga also had a time in her life when she wanted to camouflage herself. Quite charming. But unfortunately, I also have the feeling that ero guro novels are not some kind of disguise. These books, whether they won literary awards or were just reference books or simply great stories, are able to completely change one's life.

This doesn't mean that every person who reads manga will become a mangaka. Obviously, some of them will focus on sports. I also heard some stories of people who went to university because they became absorbed in caricatures of historical figures. I don't mean to say the contrary of "all roads lead to Rome" but rather that every road is connected to any place.

In any case, this sportswoman was reprimanded for reading this type of printed books and she is trying to change the subject by saying the word "tongue" here and there. I also feel something like an endless sexual desire growing inside this high school girl. I really don't know who is to blame in her lineage for such a behavior.

The directionality of human life. Directionality.

Yes, that's it, the directionality.

"Aromatic?[141] Are you talking about the sweet perfume of sweat you can smell in gymnasiums, Araragi-senpai?"

"Putting aside this 'aroma' of yours, I never mentioned sweat at any point. Don't make me say things I didn't say! I wonder how an indecent girl like you was able to lead to the top the female basketball club. So, what I meant to say was that, contrary to 'speed', 'velocity' has a sense of directionality."

Which is used in modern technologies. In the so-called location-based services?

Is it related to angles? Or to vectors?

---

[141] 方向性 (*houkousei*, "directionality") and 芳香性 (*houkousei*, "aromatic") are homonyms.

"Speed" is a mere measure of quickness[142] whereas "velocity" represents a speed with a sense of where it is heading whether it is north, west, east, south, left, right, forward, backward, up, down, along the x, y or z-axis.

"I see. This means that, for example, even if you were to run at 100 km/h, if you were running in the opposite direction, you would never reach your goal. Conversely, if you were to walk very slowly but without making mistakes on where you are heading, you would reach your goal even if it would take a certain amount of time. 'Velocity' represents this kind of measurement."

A difference in the directionality implies a difference in everything.

As a matter of fact, this not only applies to Kanbaru but also holds a deep meaning for me too. Sprinting at full speed, with no clear idea of your goal. There is no need to dig up memories such as my hellish spring break or my nightmarish Golden Week to see the connection. It is my daily routine.

Even when I confronted the "Monkey's Paw".

I was probably even more off than its owner, Kanbaru. It was like I was rushing directly to the ground.

"Even if you have a wish… Or an objective, finding the correct route to get to it is the difficult part, I can tell you."

Speaking in terms of location-based services, it's not that there is no navigation system that can help you accomplish any of your dreams, there are also people like me who have no sense of direction and who get lost easily.

You can't always follow the signs. You also can't go against common sense.

Even without encountering a snail, people can lose their way very easily.

You can even completely be at a loss.

"I wonder if in your particular case, having a 'Monkey's Paw' was like running with a blindfold. On one hand, you possessed an immeasurable

---

[142] This time, "speed" is written as スピード (*supiido*) and "quickness" as 速さ (*hayasa*).

amount of power but on the other hand, it was kind of bursting in all directions."

"Nay. In the end, I set my eyes on where I wanted to go. I set my eyes on the thing I was looking for."

Muttered Kanbaru while raising her left arm which was wrapped in bandages… Her tone of voice was the same as when talking about erotic novels. But now, it was like the vector was different.

The thing she was looking for. Her target.

Me. And Senjougahara.

And also "that".

I don't want to think about it anymore… If today, Kanbaru Suruga could make a third wish, I wonder what it would be.

If someone were to say to you that he could grant any wish you had and you were to succumb to it, then it wouldn't be a proof of the directionality of humans but rather of their humanity. It's a human thing to request a hundred wishes.

However.

It doesn't mean that undesired greed is wonderful.

"Monkeys are agile animals. They can nimbly climb over obstacles. They would fail at times, but even though, along the road, they would end up heading toward their goal. Surely, the fastest route is not necessarily the shortest one. Surely, the shortest one is not necessarily the correct one. If we assume there is something my mother wanted to convey through my 'left hand', then I wonder if it was not precisely this."

"Are you saying that even if you make a side trip, even if you take a detour… Even if you become lost, then it's fine?"

Even if you walked slowly, you would reach your goal one day. Even if you ran in the opposite direction, you would also eventually reach your goal too. After having enjoyed a trip all around the world.

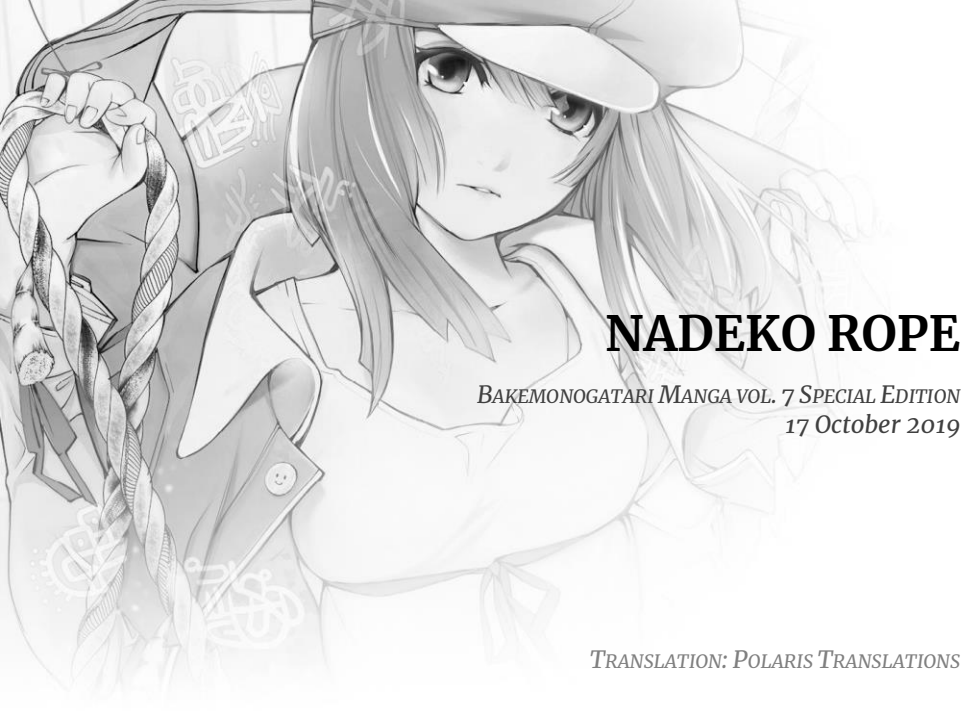
Every road is connected to any place.

"Even if you don't find your way."

Even if your wishes were not granted, even if your dreams were broken.

Even if your thoughts don't get through. It's fine.

If you start running.



NADEKO ROPE

Bakemonogatari Manga vol. 7 Special Edition
17 October 2019

Translation: Polaris Translations

"Ko… Koyomi-onii-chan. What do you think it means to be friends?" asked Sengoku. "Nadeko ended up getting cursed by her friends at school, but normally, friends wouldn't do something like that, right?"

"Hmm."

To that question, it would be extremely easy to respond with, "People who do something like that were never your friends in the first place," but right now, Sengoku probably didn't want to hear that kind of cheeky logic from me.

Really, what a sweet girl.

However, if so, it was a good thing that I was the one she asked.

After all, in his second year of middle school, Araragi Koyomi had also thought an awful lot about what it meant to be friends—although, it was actually in my first year of high school, and it was less "an awful lot" and

more just feeling awful about it,[143] but let's just say those were within an acceptable margin of error and didn't need to be corrected.

I don't need friends.

Making friends would lower my intensity as a human.

When I had followed such a lofty philosophy, it had ended up becoming completely denied, without leaving a trace, by the class president among class presidents, Hanekawa Tsubasa—but having said that, if you asked whether I had currently defected to the side of friendship supremacy, then it wasn't as simple as that.

My uncooperative spirit could not be quelled so easily.

"It's possible that, *because* they have friends, they're able to curse those friends, y'know. After all, if they didn't have friends, then they wouldn't be able to curse their friends, right?"

"… Hm? Uh, huh?"

Sengoku tilted her head in puzzlement.

Maybe I was being a bit too pretentious.

However, it wasn't that I was arrogantly trying to play around with logic just to mess with her… In reality, there were many ways that trouble could occur *because* the other person was a dear friend.

Relationships between humans—if I were to sum it up into a single word, it would be "bonds"—weren't necessarily made up of only positive components.

At times, bonds could become ropes that tie down your relationships.

What pulled people down the path of evil was not devils or enemies—unexpectedly, they could even be close friends.

"For example… Let's say, Sengoku, that if the girl that cursed you wasn't your friend… In other words, if the relationship between you two was at the level of just a classmate. Then, if the person she liked ended up confessing to you, that girl probably wouldn't have gone so far to curse you, would she?"

---

[143] Koyomi uses the words よくよく (*yokuyoku*, "a lot") and くよくよ (*kuyokuyo*, "worrying").

Because they were close—because they had a deep relationship.

The deeper it was, the more betrayed she would feel; the deeper it was, the more envious she would feel; and the deeper it was, the more hurt she would feel… She cast the curse, not because she didn't think of Sengoku as a friend, but because she *did* think of Sengoku as a friend.

"Or it's possible that, because she knew that you were someone she got along with, she was able to easily throw curses at you without holding back—there's that possibility. Like, it's nice to have a relationship that's close enough that you can quarrel honestly with each other."

"I, I don't think that's nice at all…"

Yeah. I didn't think so, either.

It would be hell if only one side thought like that—in regards to the way Senjougahara showered me with bullets of verbal abuse as sharp as knives, if that was just supposed to be her way of opening her heart up to me, then I wouldn't be able to simple-mindedly enjoy it.

Wasn't that reasoning how domestic violence occurred?

Even if they say, you're the only one I want to show my true self to, there were cases where that "true self" wasn't good for anything at all.

"When abusive parents tell their kids, 'This is all for your sake', then the kids might actually believe that for real… But should that really fall under the category of familial love?"

Senjougahara's mother had indeed been thinking for her daughter's sake—and even though those feelings should not have been on a one-way street, there was still that much of a discrepancy.

And that sort of interaction was likely to occur, even in friendship.

… However, between my idea of friendship as a guy, and Sengoku's idea of friendship as a girl, it was possible that there were discrepancies there, too.

With both male and female friends, it made even more patterns possible—like, could friendships even be formed between guys and girls? And if you add romance to the equation, then the circumstances would get even more complex—although, at this point, it felt kind of like I was making it harder than it needed to be.

Thinking about it, there wasn't really any other reason to make friends at school except to "have a fulfilling time"… Didn't people fall into the state of cursing and being cursed, because they were trying to recklessly find further meaning, and in some cases further ideals, in that?

"Huh? So, Koyomi-o*noroi*-chan,[144] are you saying that you don't need friends?"

"Who are you calling Koyomi-o*noroi*-chan. Ah, no, that's not what I'm saying."

Not good, not good.

I was almost going back to where I started.

Of course, if you didn't worry about making friends at all, and focused purely on your studies and club activities, then it would certainly increase your chances of making a name for yourself in the future—but it was a bit doubtful as to whether you could actually call that a fulfilling life.

Not to mention, your intensity as a human.

On the other hand, was it just my obsequious imagination to feel that it was more fulfilling to have fulfilling break times, rather than a fulfilling life?

Regardless of whether it raises or lowers your intensity as a human, it was a fact that, if you didn't have friends, it made your school life harder.

However, in reality, as definite evidence, Senjougahara had gotten higher grades in high school without any friends than she had gotten in middle school, when she had essentially led an army—at that time, her relationship with her mother had already broken down, and you could say there wasn't really any meaning in her keeping her grades up, so it was a little ironic.

Or maybe… Hanekawa had given me the extreme logic of "If I wouldn't be able to die for that person, then I wouldn't call them a

---

[144] This is purely a visual pun with お兄ちゃん (*onii-chan*) and お呪ちゃん (*onoroi-chan*), with the 兄 in "*onii-chan*" being replaced with the similar-looking 呪 for "curse". The pun is not necessarily supposed to be read aloud, and お呪ちゃん may not necessarily be read as "*onoroi-chan*", but I don't think there's a good way to translate this at all.

friend"… But in the present day, she was probably about the only person that would demand such a strict definition of friendship, and you could even say that it was kind of an incredible mistake to try to impose a definition on friendship in the first place.

And though I didn't necessary want to use that as evidence, it was true that Hanekawa, who had saved me with that graciousness of hers, did not exactly have very many friends herself.

As for Kanbaru… Who knows?

She was a bright and cheerful girl, and it was hard to believe she ever made her friends uncomfortable, but as a star that's admired and idolized, she surely had her own problems that came from that… How did a star like that feel about friendship?

Did she even have real friends she could speak on equal terms with? Although, those sorts of worries and concerns were probably a bit too much.

Before that, the term "real friend" itself was already a little questionable… If you were doubting that someone wasn't a real friend, then they couldn't be a real friend—but even if you *didn't* doubt it, that didn't mean that they *were* a real friend, either.

"Sengoku. What do you think?"

"Eh?"

"No matter what, that girl did end up cursing you—but what do you think about a friend like that? Did you feel angry, resentful, hateful… Didn't you think that you wanted to curse her back?"

"Um…"

She turned her head down, looking a bit troubled.

The girl, who had wound up possessed by a snake as if bound hand and foot by a rope, responded with her head still down.

"I dunno. I've never really thought about her that much. I, I mean, because my body hurts and all."

"…"

So that's how it was, for Sengoku Nadeko.

Cuteness to spare and hatefulness a hundredfold—to the question of what it meant to be cursed, perhaps the one seeking a serious answer was not Sengoku, the one who was cursed, but instead, the one who did the cursing.

Rather than the fact that the person she liked was ignored, it was possible that she cursed herself the most for being the one to curse her friend.

If so, then perhaps, unraveling the rope that had tied them together like a magic trick and not cursing her back could, in this case, be the worst curse of all—before thinking about what it meant to be friends, go and think about your friend herself.

It's way too cruel to say with a cute face, that you've never thought about her.

She didn't matter to you?

It was like a malediction laced with the poison of those words.

NADEKO COURTSHIP

BAKEMONOGATARI MANGA VOL. 8 SPECIAL EDITION
17 February 2020

TRANSLATION: NYOREM

"By the way Sengoku, I would like to know more about the schoolboy who confessed to you and started all this mess. Are you okay with it?"

Later on, Kanbaru Suruga asked me if I, her "dearest senior", was the embodiment of the lack of delicacy. So that's how she sees me… Considering a "lack" as something that can be embodied, that's quite a philosophical concept coming from my dearest junior. But I wasn't able to ask her if she was talking about "delicacy" or "democracy" or something like that.

Now, about the current case involving the curse of a snake, pinpointing its origin would probably complicate the argument, but this was something that I couldn't overlook.

"Well, umm, being asked that suddenly… Just wait a little, Koyomi-onii-chan. N-Now, Nadeko needs to recall his name…"

Does she have that many friends that she can't remember that boy? Is she boasting about her intensity as a human?

She's quite confident about her future.

"It was Na-Naijoushi."

"Naijoushi?"

"N-No it's wrong. That's the name of a place in the Hirosaki prefecture."

Were you thinking about your own name?[145]

That's impressive.

"Nadeko didn't really know that boy… Didn't have any interest in him. It was practically the first time Nadeko met him. Perhaps, Nadeko didn't even know his name from the start."

"No, that's not—"

That's possible.

Or maybe, this classmate assumed that it wasn't possible for Sengoku to not know his name, and because of that he didn't even take the time to introduce himself? We also have to consider the fact that a cute girl like Sengoku received a confession from a total stranger.

"I see. That was probably not the first time someone confessed to you, right? But only this time ended in a bad way."

"It always ends in a bad way."

That's why Nadeko decided not to think about it. She said with a serious look.

I'm not used to her serious face.

Even me, the embodiment of the lack of delicacy, could feel that the atmosphere became heavier. But what I wanted to know lied somewhere else.

What do you feel when someone confesses to you?

Of course, I know what you want to say. "A girl, namely Senjougahara Hitagi, just confessed to you, right?"

But, to put it another way, I *never* confessed to anyone. Even going back to elementary school, I was the embodiment of "being not confessed to". That's why I feel this schoolboy is kind of superior to me. It must have taken him a lot of courage to confess to a schoolgirl like Sengoku Nadeko.

---

[145] *Naijoushi* (撫牛子) and *Nadeko* (撫子) share two kanji.

"Anyhow, when someone says that he likes you, it's difficult to feel bad, right?"

"Nadeko fe-felt bad."

"You did…"

With my experience in "being confessed to" amounting to only one instance, I was listening attentively to Sengoku. I guess that if you were to confess to someone you don't know, or someone that you hate, then instead of feeling happy, you would be quite scared. There's also the fact that it can be considered rude to turn down a confession.

"Also, this kind of stuff can completely break relationships between people."

It completely did.

I started thinking, unintentionally. Senjougahara confessed to me and we started going out, but if at some point, another person would have confessed to me, I wonder how I would have reacted.

Would I have rejected her like Sengoku? But, contrary to her, I don't have any other person that I like. I never did. Truly the embodiment of its non-existence. If I started going out with someone simply because that person liked me, then I would feel like I would lose my free will. But is that okay? Is it wrong to go out with someone because you didn't feel bad when that person said that she liked you? Putting aside the fact whether this person exists or not.

Sengoku Nadeko may look timid and delicate, and that boy confessed to her. She was probably looking at the ground, like a frail and frightened animal. And she strongly rejected him, going as far as endangering the bonds she had made with her female friends. That's a very different attitude.

"You see? It's like I told you. It's better to get married to someone who loves you than to someone that you love. You'll be happier this way."

"B-But, by doing that, instead of making you happy, you'll make your companion unhappy, no?"

Hmm. Well, she's right.

Being married to someone who loves you means that your companion will be married to someone whom he loves. Love is, in a certain manner, very selfish.

"Koyomi-onii-chan. Naijoushi thinks that it may be the difference between love and courtship."

"Are you still talking about the Hirosaki prefecture?"

"Ushiko[146] thinks."

"There's still the part with 'ushi'… What do you mean by the difference between love and courtship?"

"Like the difference between confessing to someone and seeking love."

It's true. Now that you mention it, these two concepts are really different. At that time, Senjougahara was, without a doubt, courting me rather than confessing. And because I was so thick-headed that I didn't realize a thing, she had to resort to all sorts of trickery to make me understand.

The way you tell your feelings is what makes a confession.

Senjougahara Hitagi was seeking love.

And I was. Too.

"Nadeko doesn't remember well, but maybe the boy who confessed to Nadeko only wanted to convey his feelings. He probably would have done the same to anyone. Nadeko feels that being confessed to is similar to being mocked."

It's possible that, since childhood, Sengoku is feeling uncomfortable about being madly in love with someone. Maybe she prefers to look at the long term. But that's something I can't know.

Well, it's very likely that confessing was a way of making fun of an introverted girl like her. But maybe it was not.

Maybe he mustered his courage and it was a sincere confession.

Maybe he was really seeking love, in secret.

---

[146] *Naijoushi* (撫牛子) with one less kanji can be read as *Ushiko* (牛子), which is also the name of a city in the Miyagi and Saitama prefectures.

If we apply the same reasoning we had in this conversation to the schoolboy, and if I'm allowed to make sweeping generalizations, then maybe we can say that what he was seeking was not love.

The greatest hate springs from the greatest love. No, the ugliest hate springs from the greatest love.

"If someone chooses to deliberately be unhappy in order to make his partner happy, then I would choose being loved rather than loving someone. Perhaps *that* is true love."

Or the true curse. Even if you understand that you made your partner unhappy, you can't stop loving him. That's the curse of the red shoes. A dance against flirting.[147]

[147] References *The Red Shoes*, a fairy tale written by Andersen in which a girl is offered a pair of red shoes making her dance against her will. She's forced to chop off her feet but the red shoes keep dancing.

HITAGI NASHORN

Bakemonogatari Manga vol. 9 Special Edition
15 May 2020

Translation: Nyorem

"I'm finally considering entering the brass band club and I was wondering if you knew some recipes to improve my musical abilities, Araragi-kun?"

"What are you saying? Are you taking me for Yamaoka Shirou,[148] Senjougahara?"

"Quite the opposite Araragi-kun. You better ask yourself why you didn't even consider the possibility of you being Yamaoka Shirou."

"Because I'm not Yamaoka Shirou. I'm Araragi Koyomi."

The brass band club? She also mentioned that she's "finally" doing it, like she's been planning it for a long time. She's at it again, spouting such strange things… Here, at Naoetsu High School, it's customary for second-years to retire from club activities when they go onto the next year in order to prepare for their entrance exams. Maybe Senjougahara Hitagi, a talented third-year student, is, at last, considering entering a club.

"This 'talented' woman of yours is mostly guaranteed to go to the university she wants due to the recommendation of her high school. That's

[148] One of the main characters of the *Oishinbo* manga. He is a food critic.

why I've decided to use this occasion to stop cramming and started to look at the clubs of our school. Araragi-kun, while you were renewing your friendship with your female friend from middle school, I wanted to do something useful, and not just having fun."

"But isn't it better to just 'have fun'? And also, 'cramming' isn't something you say for yourself you know? While we're at it, what were *you* doing when I was almost killed by a snake?"

"It's obvious, I was diligently working on my reconciliation with Kanbaru."

"The diligent one was Kanbaru… The same Kanbaru who was forced to retire from her club…"

By the way, I was almost killed at that time too. I'm starting to wonder why I'm still alive after all these events. I was told numerous times that it was because of my condition as a pseudo-immortal vampire, but if I do say so myself, I have the feeling that even a perfect vampire wouldn't step in such a harsh environment, where you could die at any moment.

"Okay, I'll accept your 'reconciliation' with Kanbaru, but why the brass band club?"

"You mean you're ready to accept my reconciliating with an old friend, but not the club I chose?"

"That's not it."

"It was just an opportunity to visit my old friends from middle school, among them Kanbaru. I started with the art club, then the calligraphy club, the science club and finally the brass band club."

"I see."

It's really hard for me to believe that someone who didn't even speak to her schoolmates would want to visit the clubs of her school. On the other hand, thinking about the days when Senjougahara Hitagi chose to be alone in the classroom, secluded in her own shell, it would make sense that she's trying to improve that aspect of herself.

"It's so typical of you to go seeing the juniors from the culture club or the ones who once respected you as their senior rather than simply going to see your classmates."

"Can you please shut up?"[149]

"'Can you please shut up?' Even though we're in the Reiwa era?"[150]

"The culture club was one of the first clubs that I identified. Even an amateur like me knows such things. And then, after the brass band club, I was planning to go to the e-sports one."

"Is that a sports club? E-sports?"

Does it even exist in the first place?

The e-sports club of Naoetsu High School.

"When I entered the main hall, I saw that there wasn't even a musical instrument I could use…"

"There's not even a main hall in this high school!"

If you really wanted to enter a club, then I'm wondering why you didn't go to the cooking one the other day when you had the chance… Although cooking is not your forte, having the willpower to invade such unknown territory is something you're good at. At the same time, it's true that personally, I haven't touched a single musical instrument in my life, so I don't have any advice to give.

"Oh, I see. Even though you touched the hair of a little blond girl, you never touched a musical instrument? Are you saying that the only thing you want to play with is your little sisters' bodies?"

"Don't make me say such nonsense! I wish I could talk to you normally."

"I didn't want the person I once admired and who was ruined to come to see me."

"This suddenly became really serious."

"I thought about it while in the cooking club."

"In the cooking club?"

"I almost became their guinea pig! That's why I scuttled off!"

---

[149] Hitagi used 黙らっしゃい (*damarasshai*), a very archaic form.

[150] Reiwa is the name of the current era in Japan, that started on May 1, 2019.

"As a senior, isn't this the only aspect of you you mustn't show? Your cowardice I mean."[151]

Well, even if she ran off, the fact that she went to see another club without losing her temper is something I can praise. As someone who is second to none at failing at high school life, this is the kind of compliment I can give to her.

"It might be a problem if you're too empathetic. Araragi-kun, when you were in middle school, you didn't have any friends right? You didn't have your moment of glory. It's at that time that you, Araragi-kun, were ruined. You failed and were ruined."

"Can you please shut up?[152] By the way, when you went to see your juniors, did some instrument catch your eye? Like a trumpet, or a flute? Or maybe they were too complex even for an amateur? What about a xylophone or a carillon? Don't tell me you chose the violin?"

"The instrument that best fits me is the Nashorn."[153]

"…"

Is my high school really recommending this woman?

Does the staff only care about her attendance record?

"Look at me. I was sick for a very long period and it was at that time that I developed quite an admiration for the nurses that tenderly took care of me. I even have some nurse uniforms in my wardrobe."

"It's true that, as your boyfriend, this wardrobe of yours is quite interesting, but first let's get the *word* straight.[154] A Nashorn isn't a musical instrument, Senjougahara."

---

[151] Hitagi used the expression 這う這うの体 (*houhou no tei*, "scuttle off"), where 体 means "body" and 這う means "to crawl". Koyomi then uses this expression in conjunction with 背中 (*senaka*, "back of the body") in an abstract way to talk about the fact that she ran off, her cowardice.

[152] The same expression that Hitagi used before.

[153] ナースホールん (*naasuhorun*) can be read as either the combination of "nurse" and "horn" or as "Nashorn".

[154] The first part of ワードローブ (*waadoroobu*, "wardrobe") is ワード (*waado*, "word").

"Are you sure?"

"A Nashorn is a rhinoceros."[155]

"Oh, I see."[156]

It sounded like the punch line of a joke but it's still a little weak in my opinion. Let's fight a little more, Senjougahara-san. To the best of our resources.[157]

"Alright. I'm ready to fight!"

"That's the kind of thing a loser would say."

"You're saying that a Nashorn is not a musical instrument but is in fact a rhinoceros. I can't accept such an affirmation. I wonder if you could explain it to me more clearly?"

"That's simple. You see, 'Nashorn' is a German word."

"Oh my! Are you implying that Germany isn't a medically advanced country? And you know that a lot of famous musicians were German too?"

"Are you serious with this argument? No matter how much you want it to be true, a Nashorn isn't and can't become a musical instrument. Nor sound like one."[158]

"Is this your punch line?"

"That's weak. The weakest punch line when talking about a rhinoceros."

"In that case, let's start again. Talking about that rhinoceros."

"That's the lowest.[159] It's not that easy you know? But, thinking about it, saying that the Nashorn is not a musical instrument really fits you. Because it's also the name of a German tank destroyer."

---

155 "Nashorn" means "rhinoceros" in German.

156 "Rhinoceros" is 犀 (*sai*). Hitagi used the expression さいですか (*sai desuka*) which has the same meaning as そうですか (*sou desuka*, "I see").

157 It's actually written 犀の角 (*sai no kaku*, "rhinoceros' horn") but Koyomi means 才覚 (*saikaku*, "resourcefulness").

158 Pun between 鳴らない (*naranai*, "does not sound") and ならない (*naranai*, "cannot be").

159 Pun between 再開 (*saikai*, "start again") and 最下位 (*saikai*, "the lowest").

"Because I'm Senjougahara Hitagi?[160] This makes one more reason for the Nashorn to be a musical instrument. It must be."

"Wow, you're so authoritarian."

"Do you know that brass band clubs come from military music? We also mustn't forget the origin of the nurses that we know. They were formed by the army, and they used the so-called Nightingale Pledge. So it must be a musical instrument."[161]

Why do you know so much about the origins of brass band clubs and the Crimean War, while at the same time not knowing that "Nashorn" means "rhinoceros" in German? Are you saying that you learned about this stuff in textbooks? Hanekawa's catchphrase "I don't know everything, I just know what I know" may be fitting for you in this instance.

"If that was the case, are you saying that the plan I devised to assert my dominance on my juniors by wearing nurse clothes and blowing the Nashorn was all for nothing?"

"It's better that way. It's the kind of story that you shouldn't even be thinking about setting up.[162] I'm starting to get confused, like a crab."[163]

"I see. But isn't there a connection between the 'clothes' from 'nurse clothes' and 'blowing' from 'blowing the Nashorn'?"[164]

"People like to pretend to be someone else. To become someone else entirely. And you seem to completely ignore what I say."

---

[160] *Senjougahara* starts with 戦場 (*senjou*, "battlefield").

[161] *Nightingale* is the name of a musical based on an Andersen story and is also the name of the oath nurses used in the 19th century. The name of the pledge comes from Florence Nightingale, a British nurse and trainer of nurses during the Crimean War.

[162] Koyomi uses the verb 化す (*kasu*, "to transform") for "setting up", where the first kanji is 化 and can be read as "*bake*". And "story" is 物語 (*monogatari*).

[163] Here, "to get confused" is the expression 泡を食う (*awa wo kuu*, literally "to eat bubbles").

[164] 服 (*fuku*, "clothes") and 吹く (*fuku*, "to blow") are pronounced the same way.

"I understand. For argument's sake, let's assume that I was wrong. About my confusion between the Nashorn and musical instruments."

She's really obstinate. She only partially admits her defeat.

"I get it. Now is the Matterhorn[165] a musical instrument? Maybe it's related to climbing?"

"Let's end the discussion here. You should know the answer if you know about its relation with climbing."

"Is it a rhinoceros?"

"That's weak."

"No, you're wrong, since it's a tank, it should be strong, right?"

[165] Name of a mountain of the Alps between Switzerland and Italy.

MAYOI ESCARGOT

Bakemonogatari Manga vol. 10 Special Edition
17 August 2020

Translation: Polaris Translations

"That reminds me, Hachikuji. Back in my motherland, there's this traditional cuisine that involves cooking snails. Have you heard of it?"

"Why are you suddenly pretending to be a Parisian? Paririgi-san."

"Oops, my bad. The vestiges of the time I spent in France as a young lad, as a leader in fashion, ended up slipping out. It leaves a bad taste in my mouth to bring this up, so I must restrain myself."

"A bad taste? More like an acrid taste. And unfortunately, you can't call yourself a Parisian unless your lineage goes back three generations."

"That's for *Edokko*!"[166]

"Considering your vampire constitution, I suppose you could say that even in Paris you'd be a night owl."

[166] A true *Edokko* (江戸っ子, lit. "child of Edo") is someone who's not only born and raised in Tokyo (formerly named Edo), but also whose lineage goes back at least three generations in Edo/Tokyo.

She's saying something needlessly clever, but only because she's Mayoi.[167]

But if it means I'll fit into the nights of Paris better, then sure, Araragi Koyomi is a night owl.

"You are quite obviously a Japanese youth. Um, what were we talking about? Traditional cuisine that involves cooking snails?"

"Yep. Let's see, I believe in French they call it, *cogito ergo sum*…"

"That means 'I think, therefore I am'!"

And I'm pretty sure that's in Latin, said the elementary school fifth-grader, with a retort about the linguistic system… This is what makes life interesting.

C'est la vie.

"But you'd be better off forgetting who you are, Paririgi-san."

"You keep referring to me as if I'm one of those 'party people', huh. Even though when I'm in front of you, I'm constantly in ecstasy."[168]

"I'm scared I'm scared I'm scared! Instead of snails, it feels like I'll be the one to be cooked up and eaten!"

After being frightened, Hachikuji said,

"It's *escargot*,"

correcting my earlier statement—why was it that, even though she could pull out French words so fluently, she still kept flubbing my name after all this time? It was quite suspicious.

"What did you want to discuss about it?"

"Even though French cuisine is one of the top three cuisines in the world, why would they go out of their way to use snails as ingredients? That was what I was thinking… Considering France is the country of wine, wouldn't it be better sense to use something like deer or bears, animals that can lay waste to the fields, as part of their local cuisine?"

---

[167] The *yoi* kanji in *Mayoi* (真宵) is the same as in *yoippari* (宵っ張り, "night owl") used in the previous line.

[168] The word for "ecstasy" (or "trance") is 忘我 (*bouga*, lit. "forgetting the self").

"Even without alluding to *gibier*,[169] it's not actually all that mysterious. Even in Japanese cuisine, we eat grilled sea snails or *sake*-steamed clams or clam miso soup, and voluntarily eat mollusks, don't we?"

Ah, is that so.

Snails didn't really have that sort of image, but once you perceive snails as just another type of mollusk, it might actually be easy to consider it, without any resistance, as an ingredient in food—so it wasn't something that could necessarily be chalked up to variation in food cultures.

Not to mention, some people even say that eating octopus or raw fish is intense.

"I talked about this with Senjougahara before, but it turns out that the popular red king crab isn't actually a crab, but a hermit crab."

"Hermit crabs don't count as mollusks, Yadorigi-san."[170]

Snails and hermit crabs just happen to look similar, said Hachikuji.

She sure is picky. I wonder if she's on that side of things.

"Speaking of resistance, I have much more resistance to the idea of the French eating cute little rabbits. Then again, snails can have those fiendish parasites residing in them, so your life could seriously be in danger if an amateur like you prepared them. No matter how immortal a night owl you are."

She sure is well-versed in the art of French cuisine.

Perhaps it's you who is the Parisienne?

A Parisienne that's as crispy as a croissant.[171]

"I see. So even if you find a snail on the side of the road and sprinkle salt on it right then and there, no matter how good it tastes, it's still bad for you."

"Is there a famine in this city or something? Also, if you sprinkle salt on it, it will melt before you can eat it."

---

[169] *Gibier* is French for "wild game". Japanese also uses the word ジビエ (*jibie*) as a loanword from French.

[170] This stutter plays with 寄居虫 (*yadokari*, "hermit crab"), and gives the word for "mistletoe" (宿り木, *yadorigi*).

[171] The word for "crispy" here is ぱりぱり (*paripari*).

"The connoisseur's way of doing it is to take it when it's half-melted and savor the feeling of it sliding down your throat."

"Don't talk about a snail as if it's ice cream… Even connoisseurs can have superficial, half-baked knowledge. You could even say they've only lived half their lives… Saying that eating snails raw or enjoying the numbing feeling of the fugu's poison is the connoisseur's way of doing it? That's basically suicidal."

I've never had snails or rabbits, nor have I had fugu, but I did feel a desire to try it even if there was poison. With its ovaries that contain the tetrodotoxin that I've become familiar with from mystery novels, they say in the Ishikawa prefecture that it can take several years to prepare and remove the poison…

"However, speaking of fugu, they ingest large amounts of poisonous snails from a young age, to the point where their internal organs become poisonous as well, so you'd be quite the reckless gourmet. There are even tales of raising fugu in controlled environments to have them free of poison."

"Is that so. In that case, it seems like we'll be able to safely eat delicious fugu even without a license."

"There are some gourmets that say that it tastes worse without the poison. Just like your girlfriend, Araragi-san."

"Whose girlfriend tastes worse without the poison? Don't talk about people as if you're some poison connoisseur."

"I said all that earlier to frighten you, but even for snails, if they're carefully raised in a well-supervised institution, you can eat them without fearing for your life. Of course, if we say that, then all sorts of ingredients have some kind of poison within them. Humans can even die from eating potatoes."

And, while it's not Senjougahara, as the saying goes, even if you eat crabs, don't eat the gills…[172] Unlike potatoes that have sprouted, it's merely superstition that the gills of a crab can hurt you, but thinking about it, there are a lot of foods in this world that you can't eat without preparing first.

The menus that appear on dining tables all over the world actually go through a considerable amount of processing. There was a point in time where pepper used for seasoning was valued highly, not just over other ingredients, but even more than gold—and perhaps this was the reason why.

Even with rice, the crux of Japanese cuisine—if you told someone they had to do the manual labor of rice polishing, they'd switch over to the bread faction in an instant.

"Even with bread, if you told someone to bake it themselves starting from wheat, they'd fall into despair."[173]

"I'd get frustrated from folding the dough for croissants, too."

"It's the same with ramen and udon. If we were told to prepare the noodles by stepping on them ourselves, we'd probably reach our limit immediately. We wouldn't be able to go without stopping in our tracks."[174]

How clever.

But if it's udon that you make, I'll eat it no matter how bad it tastes.

"If there's a food that you can eat simply without preparing it somehow, would it just be bananas?"

---

[172] A Japanese saying (蟹は食べてもガニ食うな, *kani wa tabetemo gani kuu na*) that comes from times before refrigeration was used, and bacteria were likely to grow on the gills, giving food poisoning to someone ingesting them.

[173] The word for "bake" (焼け, *yake*) is pronounced the same way as the word for "despair" (自棄, *yake*).

[174] The noodles are prepared by stepping on them (足踏み, *ashifumi*), and Mayoi then uses the expression 二の足を踏む (*ni no ashi wo fumu*, "hesitating", lit. "stepping on both feet").

"Apparently, if you don't put bananas through a selective breeding process, they'll end up being full of seeds and hard to eat. You have to use fertilizers and agrochemicals to get the kind of banana you want."

Does that mean we should just eat mist to survive?

Well, considering the air pollution nowadays, even mist might not be safe to eat… It would be a bit like drinking rainwater, and you'd have to boil it before doing so.

"Then it would become a sauna, wouldn't it."

"Really, before the discovery of fire, what exactly did humans eat to survive?"

"Even plants will wither if they get too much sunlight or too much water. When it came to eating, humans became masters of their regressive state. In conclusion, they were so thankful to be able to eat at all that, regardless of what they liked or disliked, they ate everything and anything, whether it was snails or rabbits or *balut*,[175] with a munch munch chew chew. *Bon appétit*!"

"That's exactly it. When it comes to *escargot*, never again will I talk about what I like or dislike. 'I eat, therefore I am'—I'll engrave that into my heart."

But still, I sweetly whispered.

"But still, Hachikuji, I'll say *je t'aime* to you as much as you want."

"You're only a Parisian for the *dessert*."[176]

[175] A fertilized developing egg embryo that is boiled and eaten from the shell, sold as street food in South China and Southeast Asian countries.

[176] Koyomi writes "I love you" with the furigana "*je t'aime*", while Mayoi writes "the end" with the furigana "*dessert*".

SURUGA EARTHWORM

Bakemonogatari Manga vol. 11 Special Edition
17 November 2020

Translation: Polaris Translations

"By the way, my Araragi-senpai. You've spoken of your regeneration ability as an immortal vampire before, my Araragi-senpai, but if my Araragi-senpai were to be cut right in half through the center like an earthworm, would you become 'two' of my Araragi-senpai 'in the style of' my Araragi-senpai?"

How many times are you going to say "my Araragi-senpai"?

I don't remember transferring my ownership rights to you.

Like an earthworm, you say… That reminds me, my girlfriend, Senjougahara Hitagi, who used to be a pair with Kanbaru over here, said something similar before… Though they're completely different types, and they don't exactly call each other friends, they must still have something in common. But nevertheless, to compare your upperclassman to an earthworm… Does this person actually respect me?

"Aren't earthworms great? I hear in English they're called '*earthworms*'."[177]

"Cool."

"In the first place, not just you, Araragi-senpai, but all humans are kind of like bugs that live in the earth, after all."

How meaninglessly satirical.

But I wouldn't let it hurt me—I'd let it pass by like the wind.

"Well, if we're going that far, then you don't really have to cut through the center. No matter where you cut, your Araragi-senpai would end up multiplying, anyway. Like *Kintarou-ame*."[178]

"Indeed. As long as the 'core' of the earthworm isn't destroyed, then no matter where you bisect them, one will become two, two will become four, four will become eight, and so on."

"Instead of a geometric progression, it's a worm progression, huh."[179]

But, a "core"?

What a nostalgic way of putting it.

Anyway, the idea that a cut earthworm would multiply should only be based in folklore.

"But what about that worm progression?"

"Well, Araragi-senpai, if I were to succeed at multiplying you into two—nay, eight of you—then we members of the Araragi Harem would be able to coexist peacefully without need for fighting. That was what this humble Kanbaru came up with."

I'd been thinking it was just out of curiosity, but her reason was far more frightening than I'd imagined—to think that her aim was not to cut

---

[177] Except for this one instance, the rest of this story refers to earthworms by their Japanese name, ミミズ (*mimizu*). Only here and in the title are they referred to by the English loanword, アースワーム (*aasuwaamu*).

[178] A traditional Japanese candy with a cylindrical shape made so that Kintarou's face appears wherever it is sliced.

[179] The word for "geometric progression" is 鼠算 (*nezumizan*), which literally means "rat counting", as in "multiplying like rats". Here, Koyomi replaces "rat" (鼠, *nezumi*) with "earthworm" (ミミズ, *mimizu*).

me in half for fun, but to divide me up and share. It's been a while since we ran into the term Araragi Harem, but even if such an indecent organization were to exist, it's not like there would be as many as eight members.

"It wouldn't be weird even if there were sixteen members. After all, the Araragi Harem doubles as a gathering for victims of Araragi Koyomi."

"If you ask me, it sounds like the members are increasing by a worm progression here."

Of course, this was all just in theory.

In practice, my body had already been cut up into pieces before during spring break, and the number of "me"s had not increased at all—the same as your ordinary earthworm.

Preservation of the self was the crux of the vampire's regeneration ability, so when cut into two, only one part would be regenerated, while the other would vanish.

"Wait, but hold on. If I remember correctly, wasn't there a short story published where Shinobu-chan had split into two people?"

"Wh-What are you talking about? That's…"

You sure are well-informed, Kanbaru-san.

Well, sorry if we happen to be treading the same ground here.

Anyway, the iron-blooded, hot-blooded, cold-blooded vampire Kissshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade may be free to increase or decrease her number of selves as she wishes, but I was but an underling of hers, not to mention a mere shadow of one now.

I could even say I was a "proliferation" of Kissshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade.

Proliferation, or perhaps, reproduction…

"However, while it doesn't really hit home for me, whether it's an earthworm or a vampire, their immortality is pretty amazing, isn't it."

"That's for sure. Whether it's an earthworm or a horned owl."[180]

"One of those is a bird."

"Whether it's a *mimizuku* or a *mimizuku*."

"… Could one of those actually be a bug?"[181]

There are a lot of animals that have the same name, huh. Not to mention there are times where you call the same animal by different names… Biology sure is weird.

"However, Araragi-senpai. If you look at things with a wide point of view, wouldn't humans be the amazing ones? For a macrocosmic god, humans are just lifeforms on a little fragment called Earth, and yet they managed to form borders and proliferate to over seven billion."

I see, that actually sounded like a proper point of view rather than satire… But hold on, what's a macrocosmic god? Aren't your athlete's superstitions getting a little too spiritual? Although, it would be hard to deny the spiritual with a world view that included monstrous apparitions.

Even in a narrow point of view, the "specimen" known as the Valhalla Duo, comprised of Senjougahara and Kanbaru, would find themselves going their separate ways—and in a sense, you could say their number increased, but in another sense, they decreased as well.

They were diminished.

Even earthworms—if you continue to chop one up, then someday, its life will end.

The same goes for all types of animals, across the board.

"However, I wonder which one."

"? Which one?"

"We discussed cutting you right through the center earlier, but Araragi-senpai, if you were to be cut horizontally through your torso, between your upper half and your lower half, which of them will regenerate and which

---

[180] Pun between "earthworm" (ミミズ, *mimizu*) and "horned owl" (ミミズク, *mimizuku*).

[181] *Mimizuku* can refer to both the horned owl and the auricled leafhopper (*Ledra auditura*).

of them will vanish? If it's a matter of self-preservation, then which one is the 'self' of Araragi-senpai?"

Hmm.

Thinking about it, your hair growing or your nails growing could be considered a form of regeneration, but you could hardly say your sense of self was contained in your hair or nails—but couldn't you?

After all, it's precisely those parts of the body that are used to test for DNA, which you could say is the proof of one's individuality.

"Wouldn't it be the upper half that regenerates? One thinks with their brain, after all."

"But that theory is based on the assumption that you think at all, isn't it, Araragi-senpai?"

It was a pretty rude thing to say to someone who was supposedly the leader of a harem. But if we took it one step further, if I were to be cut at the neck, would it be my body that regrows the head or my head that regrows the body?—it reminded me of stem cells.

In that case, what about the hair on the head that contained the brain? Regenerating yourself with just a strand of hair sounded less like cloning technology and more like an anecdote from *Journey to the West*.

It was hard to weigh.

Did the "heart" reside in the brain, or in the chest?

"In Hanekawa's case, it feels like hers might be in her chest."

"Those don't sound like the words of a person that thinks."

"For Kanbaru-kouhai, would it be your legs?"

"I wonder. After all, speaking of *Journey to the West*—the aberration I made a wish to was a monkey, not a vampire."

Saying that, Kanbaru looked at herself.

Not her legs, but her arms. Her left arm.

"If, at that time, Shinobu-chan had cut off this left arm with that sword—then, between the 'arm' that gets cut off and the 'me' that gets cut off. Which one would be the real 'me'?"

If she were going to effectively—or ineffectively—regenerate.

From where would it start?

As a person who's been chopped up, burned, dragged up, smashed—as a person who's had all his blood sucked out—as a person whose existence was worth as much as a strand of hair that had been pulled out, I had no way of knowing. For it was doubtful to me, too—the junior that adored me, and the junior that detested me.

Both parts were surely inseparable from the character of Kanbaru Suruga—but a question like that was better off buried deep in the earth with the earthworms.

NADEKO EYE LEVEL

Bakemonogatari Manga vol. 12 Special Edition
17 February 2021

Translation: Polaris Translations

"By the way, Sengoku. Those bangs of yours that you grew out—and of course I mean they grew out in a good way—but doesn't it hurt?"

"It, i-it, i-i-it, it doesn't hurt at, a-a-at, a-at, at all?"

The one who responded to my exceedingly eloquent question was none other than my sister's friend, Sengoku, whose agitation was all but natural at this point—she had an expression that looked like a caricature of agitation, and her way of record scratching on the first sound of her sentence was a technique that followed the fundamentals, although scratching toward the end of the sentence was a novel sort of fade-out.

What was she, a DJ?

Though her posture was that of a *kabuki* actor—an unexpected blend of East and West.

"It's not like I grew them out to hide the third eye on my forehead or anything…"

"No, that's not what I meant by it 'hurting'…[182] I was just wondering if the tips of your hair would get into your eyes and poke at them."

For someone like me, who sometimes had the eyesight of a vampire, it wasn't really necessary for me to dramatically improve my eyesight, but it wouldn't really be funny if I lost my eyesight because of my hairstyle.

Although, a Sengoku in glasses wouldn't be bad.

"There's nothing to worry about there. It's true that the ends of my hair can taper off a bit, though."

"Are you talking about a shaggy haircut? You sound like an artisan."

"But I like to walk with my eyes closed so that they don't poke at me."

Rather than an artisan, this made her sound like an expert.

Hold on, you close your eyes?

Even now? Behind those bangs?

"Well, even if the ends of my hair didn't get into my eyes, just by being alive, your eyeballs will start to deteriorate over time. In that case, I think it's better to not misuse my eyesight, and instead keep my eyelids closed and fresh normally so that I only use them when I absolutely need to."

Misusing eyesight… She said it like one would say misusing political power.[183]

I've heard of athletes reading books, watching TV, or playing smartphone games only in moderation so as to take good care of their eyes, but to think that those bangs acted as a defensive wall.

In the first place, it was common knowledge that one grows hair in order to protect their head—so perhaps Sengoku's bangs were playing the role of goggles to protect her eyes from the sun's rays. Even the hat she wore low over her eyes was a sun visor, huh…

However, if you didn't use them at all, then by not using them, I felt like they would still deteriorate… Or rather, they'd degenerate.

---

[182] Nadeko interprets 痛い (*itai*, "hurting") as its slangy usage of "cringy" or "embarrassing".

[183] Pun between "eyesight" (視力, *shiryoku*) and "political power" (権力, *kenryoku*).

Just look at those deep-sea fish that live in a world of darkness.

"I can't look at them. Because my eyes are closed."

"You got me there."

She sure showed me up,[184] that could have been the punch line I used, but why don't we continue the conversation for just a bit longer.

"In the first place, you're the type of person who plays games, aren't you?"

"I turn the screen off, and play with sound only."

That was a super-advanced way of playing.

If she could do that, then it seemed like she would be able to play without not only the controller, but without even the console itself—her eye level was at a high level.

"You know. The essential things in life are seen not with the eyes. You'd be able to see the world better if you looked with the eyes of your heart, Koyomi-onii-chan."

The eyes of your heart… I couldn't say it didn't sound even more shady than a third eye, but perhaps that depended on how you looked at it. Just with the eyes, that is.

Perhaps the eyes of my heart were too dull to take a straight look at the wise sayings of the little prince.

"I've seen too much of this filthy world, after all."

"That's so cool, Koyomi-onii-chan…"

Can you retort with something instead?

Can you not stare at me with those eyes sparkling like the stars, visible even through those long bangs?

That gaze was too radiant for me.

However, now that I realize it, saying that "you shouldn't judge people by their appearance" involves the premise that "we unconsciously like to judge people by their appearance", and I think that's something we should keep in mind. Especially since, at some point, the teachings started to

---

[184] Koyomi uses the expression 目にものを見せてやる (*me ni mono o misete yaru*, lit. "show a thing to my eyes").

become “it’s not just etiquette that’s important, but your personal appearance, too.”

If you’re going to be caught up by those misleads and feints, then it might be a valid strategy to just ignore your eyesight, and not look at all.

“That reminds me, the goddess of justice at courthouses is blindfolded while carrying scales, isn’t she? In order to lay down fair judgments without being led astray by appearances…”

For those sorts of people who are at a poor station in life with the possibility of being brought to court for some crime or other, they may be thankful for this policy, but if possible, I would like for the courts to keep it in their hearts and not actually wear blindfolds during trials.

It’s unthinkable for someone to ascertain the truth with just the mind’s eye.[185]

Plus, aside from the defendant’s appearance, can’t you see your scales being tilted?

“They say that eyes speak louder than words, and that seeing is believing. Even with me having a reputation for having eyes on my back, I still think it’s important to make frequent eye contact, Sengoku-*uji*.[186] Or should I say, Kaga-Hyakumangoku-*uji*?”[187]

“You shouldn’t make fun of people’s names, Koyomi-onii-chan…”

Rather than a retort, I ended up just being admonished normally.

But if that was the case, then I would prefer you told Hachikuji that… But I guess they’d never actually come into contact before? Regardless, after being told that, especially after being told that by Sengoku, I had to apologize.

The act of teasing someone using their name can be as delicate as an eyeball.

---

[185] Pun between “unthinkable” (心外, *shingai*) and “mind’s eye” (心眼, *shingan*).

[186] An old honorific used for clans.

[187] Kaga-Hyakumangoku is a hot spring inn, but the joke here is that “Hyakumangoku” is “Sengoku” with *sen* (千, “thousand”) turned into *hyakuman* (百万, “million”).

In Sengoku's case, while her family name was just cool, her given name did seem like something she'd get teased for… I felt like, when I was in elementary school, I constantly asked about why it wasn't "Nadeshiko" instead.

Perhaps I'd poked at a trauma of hers—emotional scars are also invisible to the naked eye, after all.

For me, it would be that hellish spring break.

Though it was certainly a large cut, I wouldn't exactly call it precious to me.[188]

"Sorry, sorry. I'd like to apologize, including for the stuff I said in the past. If you could look the other way."

"Nadeko is sorry, too. It was a lie when I said that I grew out my bangs to preserve my vision."

"Well, of course."

"The truth is that I'm not good with making eye contact."

Rather than hiding my third eye, I was hiding my embarrassment.

That was what Sengoku said.

Because she'd been hiding something, I'd assumed it was something that was worth hiding, and mistaken it for some sort of valuable truth, but once I dug into it, it turned out to just be hiding her embarrassment—after having seen through it, it was quite the anticlimax.

The skilled hawk may not always hide its talons—it may not be talons, but dreams.[189]

And not dreams, but nightmares.

"When someone looks straight into your eyes and it feels like they can read your mind, isn't that scary? It's something that Tsukihi-chan often does."

---

[188] The kanji for "large" (大) and "cut" (切) make up the word "precious" (大切, *taisetsu*).

[189] Pun between "talons" (爪, *tsume*) and "dreams" (夢, *yume*).

It was true that that girl liked to look directly into your eyes without wavering.

You may as well call it direct heat.[190]

"It almost feels like my retinas are being scanned. Like all my personal information is about to be leaked. That's why I end up closing my eyes."

Thanks to my sister, such a cute girl ended up becoming the kind of character that uses her mind's eye… I couldn't help but feel responsible.

I couldn't turn a blind eye to this.

"Alright. In that case, I'll be your eyes from now on. Just like Swimmy."[191]

"Y-You don't have to go that far…"

I was rejected.

You could say that she was just looking at me from a distance, but my feelings were always looked down on with a bird's-eye view.

"It's hard making eye contact with my homeroom teacher, to the point that I want to wear sunglasses in class, but of course I can't actually do that, so I'm enduring it."

"So don't tell me, those bangs were actually the result of a compromise?"

There was nothing harder to get across than the endurance and compromise of someone that wasn't you… Just like the pain of being strangled by a snake.

"But, but, Koyomi-onii-chan, in the end, maybe the reason I isolate myself by not wanting to look at people's eyes is because I'm constantly looking into people's eyes. Because I was constantly aware of the gazes of others, I ended up thinking that maybe other people were aware of Nadeko's eyes, too."

---

[190] Koyomi adds the kanji 火 from 月火 (*Tsukihi*) to 直視 (*chokushi*, "looking in the eyes") to form 直火 (*chokubi*, "direct heat").

[191] The main character (a fish), from a picture book of the same name written by Leo Lionni in 1963. In it, Swimmy leads a school of other fishes, afraid of being eaten, by having them swim in the shape of a large fish, and taking place among them in the spot the eye would be.

That was, quite literally, an insight.

Or should I say, the focus of her attention was different.[192]

When you think that everyone thinks a certain way, it's usually because you're the one thinking it the most—when I thought that all my classmates considered me to be a dropout in school, it's because I was treating myself as a dropout the most.

It's the kind of self-contradiction where you're worried that someone set up a security camera, so you end up setting up your own security cameras. If you gaze for long into an abyss, the abyss gazes also into you—that is, if you're feeling that way, it's because you were gazing into the abyss.

Thinking about it, there was no way my smaller younger sister was staring into people's eyes in order to understand their feelings. It's because she loved herself to the point that she believed, without a doubt, that everyone else loved her, too.

In other words, she was a self-siscon.

"That's true. Rara-chan just turns on the direct heat toward the other person for no reason at all."

"Scary… My sister is scary…"

However, it was an extremely apt metaphor—after all, she was the advisor of Tsuganoki Second Middle School's Fire Sisters.

"This idea has been shelved for quite some time now, but originally, in *Nisemonogatari* volume 2, my lovable sister was supposed to have fallen into despair at the idea of justice and turned into a pyromaniac, setting fire to the abandoned ruins of the cram school. Just a side note."

"Co, co-co-co-co, co-co-co-co-co-co-co-co, come to think of it, isn't that too much for just a side note?"

Her record scratching went so far that she almost sounded like a chicken.

Allow me to call her, Chicken Nadekko (although, if I showed no signs of remorse from earlier, she was sure to get mad at me).

---

[192] The expression used here is 目の付け所 (*me no tsukedokoro*, lit. "the focus of her eyes").

"After hearing that idea, I realized it's better to keep unseen things unseen… Let sleeping dogs lie."

"Oops. Once again, it appears my quick wit has slipped in and out of view. It's been exposed, my knowledge."[193]

Incidentally, while this idea was not used, it was carried over into *Nekomonogatari (Shiro)*—in a sense, it was Hanekawa's calamity, her calamity of fire.

Perhaps she didn't see the light of day, but she saw the light of the fire.[194]

In conclusion, whether it's truth or deception or light or darkness or fire or water, or perhaps like oil and water or like oil to a fire, it's enough to look at with a wink.

"Right. Nadeko can't become like Tsukihi, who always says 'Look right into my eyes and speak', but I do think that I'd like to cut my bangs short someday. It's really hard being cursed because I had no idea about my friends' feelings or even my own feelings—it was too terrible to even look at."

In Nadeko's case, it wasn't the light of the fire that I saw, but the bull's-eye.[195]

Saying that, Sengoku turned her face downward, as if lowering a shutter—taking a wait-and-see approach for the looks of her downcast eyes, it didn't seem like those eyes, or rather, that day[196] would come. But when the day comes that Sengoku did show her eyes as if she were rolling dice, if

---

[193] The word for "knowledge" (知見, *chiken*), in addition to its similarity to "chicken" (チキン, *chikin*), includes the kanji for "seeing" (見, *mi*).

[194] The term used for "light of day" is 日の目 (*hinome*, lit. "eyes of the sun"), which is then transformed into 火の目 (*hinome*, lit. "eyes of fire").

[195] Going off the earlier note, the term used is 蛇の目 (*janome*, lit. "eyes of the snake").

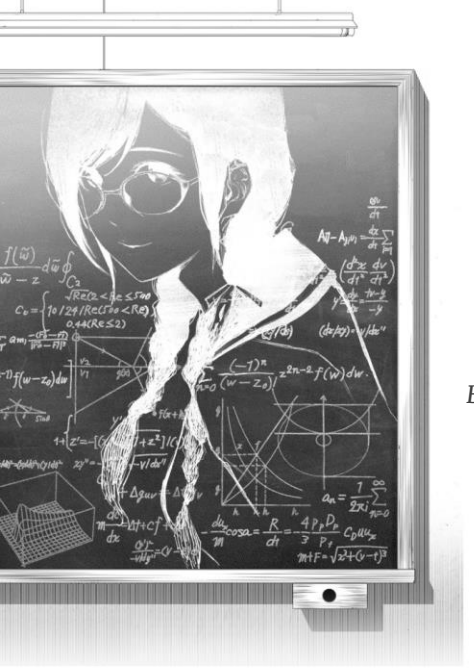
[196] Visual pun between "eyes" (目, *me*) and "day" (日, *hi*).

you asked whether a demon would show up or a snake would show up,[197] then, well, of course what would show up would be a snake.

And they all lived happily ever after.[198]

[197] A Japanese saying, 鬼が出るか蛇が出るか (*oni ga deru ka ja ga deru ka*, meaning “God only knows what may happen”).

[198] The expression “happily ever after” (*medetashi, medetashi*) is commonly written as 愛でたし、愛でたし, and more rarely as 目出度し、目出度し. Here, it mixes the two with 目出度し、愛でたし. The first half (the less common spelling) usually doesn’t mean anything, but in this case it happens to use the kanji for “eyes showing”, which is rather appropriate here.



TSUBASA RANKING

Bakemonogatari Manga vol. 13 Special Edition
17 May 2021

Translation: Polaris Translations

"Hanekawa, you always get rank 1 in our year for test scores, right? It's hard for a rank 9999 like me to even begin to guess, but what the hell does that feel like? What is it like to reign at the top, looking over the common folk?"

"There's no such thing as a rank 9999."

We don't even have 9999 third-years at Naoetsu High School—said the one reigning at the top with an amazed look.

"Well, it's not much—I just think, oh, I guess it was my turn to be rank 1 this time. In the end, if we're assigning ranks to people, then someone has to be rank 1, and that just happened to be me this time. There are times where I don't end up being rank 1, and it doesn't really bother me."

She was talking about test rankings as if they were some sort of circular notice.

If she won three hundred million yen in the lottery, she'd probably say the same thing—"Oh, I guess it was my turn to win three hundred million yen," or something.

"But was there really a time that you didn't end up rank 1? I've always imagined you as being rank 1, ever since our first year."

"My, it makes me happy to know that you know all about my grades, Araragi-kun."

Although it was Hanekawa that was more likely to know all about my grades—it wasn't like my test results were good enough to be posted out in the hallway, but it wouldn't be weird if she found out my true rankings through a different route.

"I don't know everything. I just know what I know."

After saying that, she calmly but firmly stated, "I haven't always been rank 1."

"When I think about getting rank 3, then I end up as rank 3, and when I think about getting rank 7, then I end up as rank 7. When I think about getting 1 point lower than Senjougahara-san, then I end up getting 1 point lower than Senjougahara-san."

"You're completely in control!"

Of her own capability.

It wasn't just happenstance—it was like she was deciding the ranking list.

She was exerting her influence over Naoetsu High School's top ranks.

"You know how the saying goes, there's more worth in getting 99 points than there is in getting 100? There was a time where I got caught up in getting whatever score I wanted—so my grades ended up deviating a bit."

"What in the world did you get caught up in?"

Also, ill-informed as I was, I'd never heard that saying before… Was it some sort of folklore passed around only among the top ranks?

"I mean, when you get right down to it, things like first place or a perfect score don't really mean much… It all depends on where you look, doesn't it? For example, I got the highest overall score in the exams the other day, but I made a blindingly careless mistake in the Japanese history exam, so I didn't get a perfect score in that subject. In other words, I'm not rank 1 in the Japanese history category."

Even so, I figured she was probably around rank 2… But I see, it was all where you looked.

Number one in album sales! But even if you said that, were you rank 1 daily, or rank 1 weekly, or even rank 1 monthly? Even if it was the same "rank 1", the reality was a bit different… And even if you say "perfect score", there was getting a perfect score on an elementary school test and there was getting a perfect score on a high school test. Even if it was the same "perfect score", the nuance was different.

"And getting a perfect score out of 100 and getting a perfect score out of 20 is completely different…"

"No, those are the same."

So they were the same.

On the other hand, if there really were more than 10,000 seniors in Naoetsu High School, I would be afraid of my ranking seriously being 9999, so it was true that, just looking at "first place" or "perfect score" numerically, there was no doubt that a change in units led to a tremendous change in values, or a change in the value system—even Hanekawa's "top of the year" status only meant that she was rank 1 among Naoetsu High School's third-years, not that she was rank 1 among students across the country.

Just as I might be ranked 100 millionth among all the high school third-years across the country, perhaps Hanekawa is merely one of the "top ranks" on the national level?

"That's it, that's exactly it, Araragi-kun. I definitely don't amount to much at a larger scale. I've only managed to get rank 1 once in the national mock exams."

So you did get rank 1 at least once…

For some reason, the nuance I felt from her words were something like, "Since I got rank 1 once, I don't need to anymore"—like an athlete that didn't just go for the gold medal, but thought, "I want to collect all of them" and aimed for the full set with silver and bronze medals, too. Though it was unclear whether or not that sort of athlete actually existed.

And even so, even that sort of rank 1 depended on what kind of national mock exams you were talking about—in terms of athletes, while I wasn't referring to Kanbaru Suruga, whose leg strength was put to good use in basketball instead of track, even if you picked a single sport, there would still be many different champions coming from many different countries.

In extreme cases, the rules might even be different…

"There's also the viewpoint that getting a perfect score under the curriculum guidelines of thirty years ago and getting a perfect score under the curriculum guidelines of today may end up being the same 'rank 1', but what's written in the answer columns could be totally different. Since there would be new discoveries and rediscoveries… The law itself might change."

Even the Center Test turned into the Common Test. With a wide variety of question formats.

Students preparing for exams sure had it hard.

"Araragi-kun, you're also preparing for exams."

"Oh yeah, that's right."

Though in my case, I was less a student preparing for exams and more living a life of suffering.[199]

"Even in the field of mathematics, which is your specialty, Araragi-kun, things like Fermat's Last Theorem and the *abc* conjecture have ended up being solved."[200]

---

[199] Pun between "student preparing for exams" (受験生, *jukensei*) and "life of suffering" (受難の生, *junan no sei*).

[200] Pedantic math nerd note: in 2012, Japanese mathematician Mochizuki Shinichi published over 500 pages outlining what he called "Inter-Universal Teichmüller Theory", a new field of mathematics he developed on his own for a decade, and which was so abstract and impenetrable that it was almost impossible for anyone else to follow. IUTT purported to solve the *abc* conjecture, a very important and difficult problem in number theory. Top mathematicians such as Peter Scholze ended up identifying what they think is a fundamental gap in Mochizuki's proof, but Mochizuki persistently pushes back and claims this is due to a flawed understanding of his theory. Over ten years later, while Mochizuki and some of his Japanese followers still defend IUTT as valid, sometimes in a pretty heated way, the rest of the mathematical community's

"I wouldn't go so far as to say it's my specialty. Although, it's true that the one who solved those two complex problems was none other than me."

"Sounds like lying's your specialty."

Regardless, it was an argument that could invalidate the idea of rankings, relatively.

If we went that far, then it almost felt like a misguided sense of equality… Even the ones in the lowest ranks could technically be considered top rankers if you started from the bottom.

"Mathematically, statistics-based values like rankings, average, or standard deviation can be artificially adjusted, so it's not good to put too much faith into them—but even so, rank 1 is still rank 1, so it doesn't leave me fully satisfied."

"Then, Araragi-kun, you should just become rank 1 yourself."

Thus went Hanekawa, saying something only a genius would say.

In other words, the punchline was that anyone could become rank 1 in something—or so I thought, but she continued after that, making me wonder what was going through her mind.

"I'm sure you can do it. Becoming rank 1 in someone's heart."

How thrilling.

Though that seemed like the hardest possible thing to do.

---

consensus is that IUTT is not yet proven, and so the *abc* conjecture remains unsolved.

KISSSHOT RANKING

Bakemonogatari Manga vol. 14 Special Edition
17 August 2021

Translation: Polaris Translations

"Oh yeah, Kissshot. I'd like to take this opportunity to ask you something, if you don't mind. You know how, thanks to those three vampire hunters: Dramaturgy, Episode, and Guillotine Cutter—you ended up being completely and helplessly beaten up, right?"

"I shall turn you into charcoal."

You are way too lacking in delicacy, she said.

The iron-blooded, hot-blooded, cold-blooded vampire, the King of Aberrations, Kissshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade, glared at me—being glared at by her in her perfected form sent chills not just down my spine, but also through my blood.

But, charcoal?

"Now that I have become complete, I can even breathe fire."

"At that point, you're no longer a demon but a *kaiju*, aren't you?"

Well, I guess she was already like a *kaiju*.

Besides, if that middle-aged man in a Hawaiian shirt, Oshino Meme, hadn't taken out her heart, it was true that she probably wouldn't have had

her limbs taken from her even if it took all three of the vampire hunters—at the very least, not as easily.

Oshino's skill in stealing her heart without the person herself noticing was nothing short of awe-inspiring, but in other words, it meant that he wouldn't have been able to do such a thing against Kissshot if he hadn't caught her off guard.

She wasn't just the King of Aberrations for show.

Even if you took away the fact that I was currently her servant and had to view her in a favorable light, I would still say as such—and that was why I wanted to ask.

Though it was just simple curiosity.

"In the five hundred years you've spent alive—well, I suppose you weren't exactly alive, since you're a vampire—how would you describe the strongest among the opponents you've fought before? It doesn't have to be limited to vampires, and it doesn't even have to be aberrations, either."

"The strongest? You mean, the strongest after me, right?"

Even the way she tilted her head was pompous.

Well, yes, the strongest after Kissshot herself.

Even though I asked about it casually, it seemed to have been a tumultuous five hundred years, so the predicament we found ourselves in this time may not have necessarily been her biggest crisis—had she had experiences where she felt even more cornered than now?

As a high school third-year who had gone through three consecutive battles against a bunch that were quite literally beyond human, I couldn't help but be simply curious—had there been anyone even stronger than those three?

There had to have been.

"I wonder about that. 'Strong' and 'weak' are just standards, after all."

Kissshot said, quite self-importantly.

What, are you planning on spouting some enlightened philosophy?

"For example… My servant. From your perspective, out of those three battles, which of them did you find the strongest?"

"Hm?"

"If you ask me, then just as I advised, it would be Guillotine Cutter at the top, and then Episode, and then Dramaturgy. However, contrary to expectations, from your experience, the hardest fights were in the reverse order, were they not?"

"Hmm…"

Now that she'd said that, it could be true.

The fight against Guillotine Cutter where Hanekawa had been taken hostage, and the fight against Episode where Hanekawa had nearly died… Just remembering them was utterly repulsive, but on the other hand, even though that class president among class presidents hadn't gotten involved, the fight against Dramaturgy that had driven me to the wall had been the one where I'd been the closest to dying.

In the first place, if that giant hadn't so graciously withdrawn from the fight, it was very unclear whether or not I could've actually won… I could believe it if he'd made the professional decision that "it wasn't worth it to get serious and injure this small fry that was just starting out". In that surrender, there may have been a plan to flatter this amateur and make me feel good about walking away.

Even if, on my end, I had my own excuses, or rather, circumstances, that it was my first battle…

"Are you saying that compatibility matters when it comes to battles?"

"I—and you also, now—we may be bad with the sun, but most beings that live on this Earth have no problem with sunlight. Meanwhile, there are beings that die from oxygen—would you define a being that dies from eating garlic the 'strongest'?"

So she was saying that even the strong had their weak points.

Even though garlic was just tasty—although, now it would kill me if I ate it.

Then, were poisonous mushrooms the strongest? The fugu? However, it was hard to think of poison, which only went into effect when ingested, as meeting the conditions for being the "strongest"—not to mention, with the fugu, we even went to the trouble of removing the poison before eating it.

Right now, the strongest person from my point of view would have to be Dramaturgy, but if I expanded my outlook, I could say that my past encounter with the flu had been an even tougher battle. A fever of 40 degrees that lasted for days on end. In terms of how many times I thought I would die, the vampire hunters barely amounted to anything.

"Also, if we're talking about mental damage, then the times I got beaten up by my little sisters were definitely more overwhelming…"

"Everyone is weak to family, after all. … When it came to my first thrall, the original Aberration Slayer, I did not make him my thrall because he was strong."

In the first place, "fighting" was a rare occurrence over my five hundred years of activity—said Kissshot.

"Is that so? I always had the impression that vampires were battle-hungry, though."

"That is a mistaken impression produced by the media."

"'Mistaken impression produced by the media'?"

"With the specialists, 'tis hunt and be hunted. The reason you ended up with these three consecutive battles this time was because of that Hawaiian shirt's plan—it was a game."

I see.

Vampire hunters—so that's what it meant to have those hunters as enemies. It wasn't that fleeing was winning, but that you won by fleeing. From the perspective of the vampires who were on the side of the hunted, they weren't on equal footing to begin with.

It's because so many countermeasures had been put in place against her that she'd been stripped of her limbs and had her heart taken from her… For someone like me, who was just starting out—if the same countermeasures were taken against me, I would surely die in an instant. In fact, it was only because I was given time to take countermeasures and strategies that I was able to exploit the weakness of the professionals who weren't accustomed to the situation of "the enemy coming after them"—it wouldn't be good for the future if I thought that I was able to beat those three entirely because of my own abilities.

After all, my own abilities were but a fraction of Kissshot's abilities. If she was attacked, if she was marked a target for extermination because she was strong, then that may as well mean that she was weak… Like an endangered species that was hunted to excess.

"I guess it's like how your grades and your intelligence don't necessarily coincide."

Though there were people like Hanekawa whose grades and intelligence did coincide—putting aside whether or not they coincided for me.

"And as for if the culprit is stronger than the victim in murder cases, that would definitely be a no…"

It really made me think.

I'd secretly schemed to tie things up with the play on words of "Strength alone is not applicable", but the current mood had become not so frivolous—perhaps it was time for me to dejectedly leave from the side gate.[201]

"In the end, it doesn't really matter if you're strong or weak, huh."

"Nay, of course it matters if you are strong. However, 'tis only in second, or maybe third place—competing with whether you win or lose."

There may be times where the strong end up losing, it would be an error in judgment to say that you should be happy to win while weak—although, there were probably a number of people who would prefer to be strong, even if they lose.

Then, what came in first place?

"Of course. 'Tis whether you live or die."

Even if you may be weak, even if you may lose.

Being alive is what matters most—said the immortal aberration. And I, not yet having returned to being human—being dead just by being alive—did not know what she was thinking as she said that.

---

[201] Pun between "strength" (強さ, *tsuyosa*), "not applicable" (通用しない, *tsuuyou shinai*) and "side gate" (通用門, *tsuuyoumon*).

MAYOI HEAVEN

Bakemonogatari Manga vol. 15 Special Edition
17 November 2021

Translation: Tigoris Translates

"I often hear it said that in creative works the image of hell is usually overly concrete, while depictions of heaven are left abstract, Awaodori-san."

"You're right, even someone like me has heard that, however Hachikuji, you've mistakenly said my name as if I'm a traditional dance festival held in the Shikoku region of Japan.[202] My name is Araragi."

"Sorry, I stuttered. Raseragi-san."

"I'm not a traditional festival taking place in the Touhoku region either."[203]

---

[202] The Awa Dance Festival (阿波踊り, *awa odori)* is the largest dance festival in Japan, held as part of the Obon festival in August.

[203] This is referring to the Aomori Nebuta Festival (青森ねぶた祭り, *aomori nebuta matsuri*), one of the three largest festivals in the Touhoku region, in which costumed dancers dance around in time with the chant ラッセラー (*rasseraa*), a shorten dialectal version of いらっしゃい (*irasshai*), calling visitors and customers to watch or join.

"Oh my, well then that can only mean that you're more into *yosakoi*,[204] Araragi-san."

"You said my name correctly that time!"

If you forced me to pick one I'd be in the *ee ja nai ka*[205] camp. I'll dance for you like a character in a Bollywood movie.

"You know what I'd like to see? Araragi-san twerking."

"So? What was it? Heaven and hell?"

"Yes. Since I will be going to heaven one day I thought that I should learn a bit about it beforehand. I guess you could say it's like location scouting for the afterlife. But since Araragi-san is most certainly going to hell I suppose you won't be lacking for guidebooks."

"Paintings of hell aren't guidebooks and diagrams aren't maps. But you might be right about one thing. I assume all of my comrades-in-arms have gone to hell, so if possible I'd like to go there too."

"You're talking like a nihilistic villain character, but Araragi-san has no friends, which means he has no comrades-in-arms either. No, if you're going to hell it's for the sin of having no friends at all."

Even though I have a friend like you? And why would not having friends be a sin?

"But it's like that line in *Anna Catalana*[206] isn't it? If you read 'All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.' then you'll probably be convinced that it's true just from hearsay, but in reality happy families are all quite different. You've simply not read enough to know that there are many concrete depictions of heaven spread out throughout a number of creative works."

---

[204] *Yosakoi* (よさこい, lit. "come tonight") is a unique style of dance that originated in Japan and that is performed at festivals and events all over the country, combining traditional Japanese dance movements with modern music.

[205] *Ee ja nai ka* (ええじゃないか, lit. "isn't it fine") was a complex of carnivalesque religious celebrations and communal activities occurring in 1867 and 1868, and appeared at first in the form of dancing festivals.

[206] *Anna Karenina* is a major work by Tolstoy, published in 1878.

"You might be right. However a catalana is a dessert dish."[207]

She's right. I got the name wrong. Am I the one stuttering now?

"I thought you meant the smell of catalana reminded you of literary works. Anyway, think of imagery like the Blood Pond,[208] the Mountain of Needles,[209] the Great King Enma,[210] and Sañjīva.[211] You can't deny that depictions of hell such as those dominate in creative works, can you?"

Sañjīva is a hell that strikes a chord within me… The fight with Kissshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade was exactly that. A hell of being torn to pieces and brought back to life again and again. If that isn't hell, then what is?

—That's why it's called a hellish spring break.

"The reason that it's easy to relate to images of hell is because it's easy to imagine feeling pain and suffering. Meanwhile, the feeling associated with heaven is a sense of well-being and euphoria which not everyone can relate to."

The variability of happiness isn't limited to families. Even among individuals, if someone were to think "I wouldn't be happy in a heaven like this," then that is a failure at depicting what heaven would be.

"If we imagine a heaven where I would be happy, then it would be a world filled with a billion Hanekawas, but it seems unlikely that such an image of heaven would resonate with everyone."

"That world sounds like hell for Hanekawa-san. And in that world the population of 'everyone' would be Hanekawa-san."

---

[207] *Crema catalana* (Catalan cream) is a dessert similar to crème brûlée.

[208] The Blood Pond (血の池, *chi no ike*) is a pond of boiling water in which bad people in hell have to swim, their blood filling the pond. This name was also given to a blood-red hot spring in Beppu.

[209] The Mountain of Needles (針の山, *hari no yama*) is a huge mountain made of sharp needles that truly bad people coming to hell have to climb.

[210] The Great King Enma (閻魔大王, *enma daiou*) is the ruler of all hells and the afterlife, as well as the one who judges the souls appearing before him.

[211] Sañjīva (等活地獄, *toukatsu jigoku*, lit. "reviving hell") is the first of the Eight Hot Hells.

She didn't outright say "I just threw up in my mouth," but I think the bile is rising. Hearing that from the girl who likes to go for walks made me rethink what I'd said and wish that I could retract the statement.

"So what is the heaven that you imagine? Oh, and we can skip the joke where you say it's a world with a billion of me in it."

"I wouldn't say that even if I were in a world where a billion guns were pointed at me. Not even as a joke."

"And now you've been shot."

"Well let's see… I have plenty of wishes like 'I want candy' or 'I want money,' but I don't think that heaven is something like that."

She was trying to soften how greedy it would sound for her to say "I want money," by saying candy first, but I don't think she pulled it off nearly as well as she thinks. Can a girl with such worldly desires as that really get into heaven?

But then again, if that level of worldly desire is enough to keep a person out of heaven, then isn't that overly strict? Accumulate good deeds; be held in a high esteem by others; live surrounded not by a billion Hanekawas, but instead by friends and family; and live a life with no regrets. If those are the conditions to get a visa into heaven, then forget about me getting into heaven, I don't think anyone will be going.

It just sounds completely unreasonable.

If the way to get into heaven is to live such a happy and comfortable life, then isn't that just outright unfair? By that logic the only people getting into heaven are the super wealthy.

"And if we suppose that it was possible to sneak into heaven without a visa, would there be security that even exists to catch you? Would it really be heaven if it had something like that?"

"I think the entire concept of 'sneaking into heaven' is loaded with sin, don't you?"

"But think about it, heaven isn't going to let you in with your smartphone. They're going to say 'Please turn off your device and leave it at the gate.' aren't they?"

"Aaah… I think I see what you mean."

In a rare turn of events Hachikuji actually agreed with me.

And she's a fifth grader whose purpose in life is to disagree with me.

"You said candy earlier, but do you think we'd even be allowed to eat candy in heaven? I feel like they'd say that candy is bad for your body and it corrupts your mind. Even though it's so delicious, they'll say that the deliciousness of it makes it a sin."

And then there's money which is nothing but a source of conflict. I doubt they've got credit cards and it's highly unlikely they allow for investments, speculating, or anything else that could be called gambling. Wanting to be rich is a sin in and of itself. Scientific and technological advancement would be a bust. In a world where poverty is a virtue, any device or tool designed to make life easier isn't going to be made.

"Speaking of reasons for conflict, I can see romantic love being forbidden as well."

"What a mess that would be. Who'd have thought I could ever be forced to live the life of an idol."

"I'll pretend I didn't hear that. I can see going back to bed also being forbidden. I bet if you were to sleep past noon they'd cast you out and you'd wake up in the Blood Pond."

The image of hell really is more concrete. The things that make us feel good when depicted in their ultimate form become sinful. So sinful that you can't say that it's a good depiction of heaven, and even if you did try to depict heaven you might just end up depicting hell instead.

"I imagine it would also be difficult for a creator to reveal what they imagine heaven to be like. The way that Araragi-san did when he told me about his world of Hanekawas."

"It's a good thing that I can't draw."

"I'd have preferred if you weren't so lecherous."

"A world with ten billion Hachikujis could be called a heaven of its own."

"Do you think saying that will make me jump for joy? What kind of messed-up conversation rate is 1 Hanekawa = 10 Hachikujis? Keep saying things like that and I'll be tempted to send you to hell myself."

Hachikuji seemed to rethink what she had said. She was probably thinking "No, it would be better to send Araragi-san to a rules-heavy heaven where he's forced to live properly." There's not much point in thinking about it so seriously.

But in the end, rather than thinking about heaven which may or may not exist, or hell which I might fall down into one day, it was better to think about walking along the road with a fifth grade girl talking about random unimportant topics as we head toward some destination that neither of us knows and that we may never reach. Of all of the things that we discussed, what we're doing now feels the most unrealistic and the most disconnected from time.

As if we're walking among the clouds.

Or perhaps as if we're walking along a spider's web.[212]

[212] Pun between 雲 (*kumo*, "cloud") and 蜘蛛 (*kumo*, "spider"). This is also a reference to the short story *The Spider's Thread* (蜘蛛の糸, *kumo no ito*) written in 1918 by Akutagawa Ryuunosuke, which features Hell, the Blood Pond, and the Mountain of Needles.

危険
危険
車輌自
通歩
貳拾
參拾
伍拾
車輌通行止
車輌通行止
車輌通行止

SODACHI SISTERHOOD

Monster Season Retrospective Booklet
11 December 2021

Translation: Mirrored Translations

"'Sup, Sodachi-nee-san! Your little-sister-in-spirit Tsukihi-chan has brought emergency supplies to enrich your quarantine life, how about that!?"

I was already struggling with the adjustment to remote classes during this stay-home period mandated by the state of emergency declaration, to the point where I was seriously considering taking time off from school, and my one and only solace was that the resident of the neighboring apartment a.k.a. a rabid dog (or rather, "Ararabid" dog) of a stalker had returned home. Nevertheless, before I had time to relax, the natural enemy that is his little sister had pressed her attack without so much as a call in advance, and was relentlessly knocking on my door—in response I had pretended with all my might to be away from home, and after about an hour of holding out the knocking finally stopped. However, just as my heart stopped racing, I heard the sound of the wooden door being quite literally blasted into smithereens.

"Oh, so you are home, Sodachi-nee-san! I could just tell, you know, from our sisterly bond!"

These fragments look dangerous, so I'll be coming in with my shoes on—said Araragi Tsukihi as she stepped inside without a speck of hesitation, a bulging shopping bag in one hand and a rock (a rock!?) that she apparently used in place of a battering ram to knock down the door in the other. Just what kind of trauma has she gone through to not think twice about smashing the door to someone's home?

And "sisterly," huh. I hate the word "bond" for being so suspect to begin with, and you go and add "sisterly" to it?

"There you go again, getting all embarrassed. It's fine, I understand, Sodachi-nee-san. Hey, we're practically like sisters, aren't we? We were such good friends when we were little. I can give you written evidence of that, if you like."

It's true that there was an extremely brief period of time when I was taken into the custody of the Araragi family when I was in elementary school, but she and I were not particularly good friends—at the very least not good enough friends for her to invade my house SWAT-style.

"Staying home is important, but so is proper ventilation. Let's get rid of this stagnant air, shall we?"

She says, while brandishing a rock… Maybe this is actually a crime scene? A masked intruder did just break into my house wielding a deadly weapon. The sudden appearance of a character who would never appear in *Day to Day*[213] had me trembling with fear. Her gloves started seeming less like a safety measure and more like a way to conceal fingerprints.

"I was rather concerned about the possibility that you had perished in the throes of these turbulent times. As they say, better be a lawbreaker than have to call an undertaker. This was an emergency rescue during the state

[213] *Day to Day* is a series of 100 short stories (one short story a day) published by Kodansha on the theme of life during the 2020 quarantine. One of them was written by Nisio Isin, and featured Okitegami Kyouko. The entire series was officially translated into English on tree-novel.com.

of emergency. Don't worry; I'm only a high schooler, they can't charge me for any crimes."

Surely no country on Earth grants high schoolers that level of carte blanche. Paying no heed to my comment, however, Tsukihi-chan continued expanding her zone of control, saying, "I'm going to borrow the kitchen, okay? I'm also going to use whatever's in the fridge, okay?" The fact that she kept asking permission for every little thing annoyed me. Her shopping bag seemed to be primarily full of ingredients, so I supposed the bit about bringing emergency supplies wasn't just a lie to excuse her breaking and entering. I could make out toilet paper and masks, too. And yet… speaking of high schoolers, hadn't high school resumed already?

"I took the liberty of skipping school today. Sodachi-nee-san, you're totes more important."

How laid-back.

She's not saying anything about being happy school was back in session, or about how she has a newfound appreciation for the everyday act of attending… Peer pressure must lose all meaning in the face of this girl. I may play at being an independent punk in normal times, but being isolated by this pandemic had my mental health in dire straits—this girl was the opposite. Talk about discovering new modes of living, she wasn't even following the law. I wanted to ask her what part of being an ally of justice involved breaking so many rules.

"This is justice itself, Sodachi-nee-san. I'm not breaking the rules. What I'm doing transcends the idea of 'following rules' altogether."

Huh? What does that even mean?

"For instance, take this shopping bag I brought with me. These have been scapegoated as part of the microplastics problem, and starting this July we're going to have to pay for them, right?"

That's true. Is she trying to say that plastic bags statistically make up less than a few percent of microplastics, so doing away with them won't help solve the overall issue?

"It's important to start building from small things—they are "micro"-plastics, after all. But if I had to say something negative about turning down

plastic bags to help the environment, it's that if you think that brand-name bottled water and prepackaged food you stuff into your ecologically friendly personal bag aren't using any plastic, you've got a big misunderstanding on your hands."

… I see. That is rather negative.

Not something you'd find in a collection of quotes.

I'm not the type who thinks that much about the environment, but speaking of shopping, I feel like those receipts that get automatically printed could have a negative impact when they start piling up, too, regardless of whether you take them or not.

"What would really solve the problem is if someone discovered a cheap plastic that would decompose within a month. It's natural to be thankful for essential workers and medical staff. But if you want to do something beyond thanking them, then you need to become one yourself. Actually, I've taken the opportunity to change my intended course of study to medical school. I want to contribute to vaccine development in the future."

Scary… She's talking about going to medical school while skipping classes as naturally as breathing. I hope she changes her mind soon. On the other hand, I could tell that she probably would have barged over here even if I'd been self-isolating due to illness.

"Thinking about what I could do right now, I applied for a job working the register at a convenience store, but I got rejected at the interview. Your other little-sister-in-spirit, Karen-chan, made use of her natural stamina and started working deliveries. She does a hundred in a day."

In that case, I'd have preferred to receive these emergency supplies from Karen-chan… well, that girl may very well have smashed the door too, let alone the windows; she might have knocked down a wall.

"I considered running for office when I turn twenty-five, but I'm sure the state of emergency will be lifted by then."

Becoming part of the system that makes laws would certainly "transcend the idea of following rules"—it also transcends the idea of breaking them. In any case, I was glad the interviewer at the convenience store had a sharp eye.

She's really something, isn't she. She'd never worry that her own life and existence were nonessential; in a world where the things people can do are getting more and more restricted, she's finding more things to do than before. Well, Tsukihi-chan's perspective is a bit extreme, but there are a lot of people like her in the world. So this is no time for me to be depressed—nor should I be coasting on the joy of being free from my stalker for a little while.

There must be something. Something I can do.

"Staying at home and maintaining self-respect are important too. Which is why, until now, I'd been looking after and playing with some elementary schoolers close to where my parents work. But now that schools have reopened, I have some spare time, so I decided to look after you next, Sodachi-nee-san."

Nadeko-chan's gone off to the city, so I've had motherliness to spare, Tsukihi-chan said. So she came to deliver emergency supplies just to kill time? And, motherliness? That's not a word I'm very fond of. I had heard Nadeko-chan made it to Tokyo, though… hmph.

So she didn't come at Araragi's request.

"Onii-chan seems to be occupied by something on a much larger scale than what I'm doing."

I would believe it. Both brother and sister are afflicted by an illness where they die if they're not looking after someone. If there really were such a disease, I hope they spread it.

As we were talking, I cleaned up the fragments of the door using packing tape (I'd rather not mention this, but I'm good at this type of work, thanks to my beloved parents), and was wondering where I might buy an explosion-proof door, when Tsukihi-chan finished making a pleasant-looking dish with the leftovers in my fridge and the ingredients she brought. Dividing her attention between cooking and looking after me, she really is a clever girl.

But, hm? Isn't this way too much food? She did use up all the leftovers—maybe she's being environmentally conscious by making so much that I wouldn't have to go out and buy lunches for a while?

"No, that's not it. I made enough for four people."

Four people? Tsukihi-chan and I make two—who are the other two?

"One for onii-chan, and one for Karen-chan. I'll be taking theirs and mine home with me. It may be difficult for us to eat together, but it's important to eat from the same pot regardless."

We'll just have to pretend onii-chan is eating with us, Tsukihi-chan added. As progressive as she is, sometimes she can be rather old-fashioned. Come to think of it, she did like kimono and such, didn't she.

"That said, Sodachi-nee-san. If you do start feeling unwell, the Araragi house is always open to you. Since we're family, there's no need for me to dirty my hands."

I will await your return with open windows and alcohol-based disinfectant.

Hearing that, I… I smiled wryly. Standing in an apartment that was now much better ventilated.

After all, faced with the blinding light of a high schooler who still had all the rash and wild recklessness that Araragi and I had long since lost, what else could I do but smile?

HITAGI GRAPH

Bakemonogatari Manga vol. 16 Special Edition
17 February 2022

Translation: Tigoris Translates

"*Ara*-ragi-kun. My, my, it's been quite some time since you've shown your face around me. I assumed that you had been stabbed to death in an alley somewhere, so I'm quite surprised."

"Don't condense '*Ara*, Araragi-kun' like that. If anyone is going to do that it should be Hachikuji, not you."

"Is Hachikuji the one who stabbed you?"

"I haven't been stabbed. Well, she stabs me in an emotional sense. No, if I were to be stabbed to death in an alley the culprit would be you. In fact I've already prepared for just such a scenario by preparing at least five ways to leave a dying message that indicates you as the killer."

"Well that's not good. So in order to stop you from leaving a dying message, I'll need to remove all of your fingers before killing you."

"At that point it becomes a message from the killer to the rest of the world. It's surprising to me that you're still appearing in mass-published

magazines. I think you'd be more suited to *kasutori* magazines,[214] Senjougahara Hitagi."

"As a gravure model."

"I was thinking more as a 'too bizarre to be real' photo model."

"But if Risuka-san and Kizutaka-kun[215] can be in mass-published magazines, then I don't see why I should be banned from being in them."

"Throwing together a combination like that makes for quite the example. A long time ago I did a collaboration with Risuka-chan, but it turned out to be a rather controversial work."[216]

"I'm sure that was Araragi-kun's fault."

"Does the fault lie with my weakness or does the fault lie with Risuka-chan for being too cute?"

"Your entire existence is a fault. A serious crime. Oh, and when I say 'serious crime' it's foreshadowing."

"I don't like that foreshadowing."

"Oh yes, and speaking of Risuka-chan, in the recently released *Bessatsu Shonen Magazine* February 2022 issue in chapter 10,[217] Risuka-chan is very cute when she talks about how her breasts are getting bigger and how it's troubling her."

"I've read it. Repeatedly."

"I'm continuing my own diet as well. Unlike Araragi-kun, I can't just pluck and scrape off my excess flesh."

"I haven't done something so befitting of being in a 'too bizarre to be real' photograph."

"Dieting for me is my fight against Araragi-kun."

---

[214] *Kasutori* magazines, from *kasutori* (カストリ, "low-grade alcohol"), were post-war magazines based on crude, titillating subjects.

[215] The two protagonists of the *Risuka Series*, another light novel series by Nisio Isin.

[216] Referring to the crossover arc *Risuka Blood* from *Mazemonogatari*, in which Koyomi meets Risuka and mistakes her for Mayoi at first.

[217] Referring to the manga adaptation of the *Risuka Series* by Emoto Nao being serialized in this magazine.

"So it's not a fight against yourself?"

"I've never disliked exercising, so for me dieting isn't a painful experience. But when I see a person like Araragi-kun who comes from one of those wealthy families that all have their slim and stylish figures, I feel greatly overfed, um, I mean, I feel greatly fed up."[218]

"A person from a wealthy family…?"

"Oh, right, you're only half-human, so you're half of a person."

"I think you've managed to be even more offensive."

"Worthless human being?"

"Please stop."

"So I enjoy exercising, but I also enjoy eating. It's a lot like the character Tsunagi-san who appears in the recently released *Bessatsu Shonen Magazine* February 2022 issue in chapter 10."

"Did you come here to advertise? You're not a magical girl. More like a criminal girl."

"Who are you calling a criminal? I haven't broken any laws… not around here anyway."

"Wait, what do you mean 'not around here'?!"

"But you know, I'm a good representation of 'honorable poverty,' aren't I?"

"I think you're putting a good spin on things, but I don't think that I can call you out on it since I am, after all, a worthless human being from a wealthy family."

"Overseas, the poorer a person is, the more likely they are to be fat, I hear. What an awful thing. It makes me want to start a revolution. But in the end, dieting requires daily effort to avoid rebounding. To that end, a person has to weigh themselves every day and record it. That's the most basic step. You should, how to say it… graph it."

"Graph."

---

[218] Pun between "obesity" (肥満, *himan*) and "dissatisfaction" (不満, *fuman*).

"When I say graph, I am not talking about the Touzai Graph where Niki-san published articles."[219]

"What current high school student who is relying on math to get through entrance exams would possibly make that logical leap? Even if you say the name Niki-san to me, I'm not sure who you're talking about."

"Kaibara-sensei's transition is often talked about, but I am paying attention to Niki-san's transition as well. I can empathize so much with Kurita-san's rise into the position of being a rival character that I'd like to have a graph of it. I can't get enough of her descent into darkness."[220]

"I don't think that they used the phrase 'descent into darkness' in that time period. And you certainly do like eating. After all, you just casually referred to Kaibara Yuuzan as 'Kaibara-sensei'."

"We were talking about the Touzai Graph?"

"No. We were talking about line graphs. It would be a line graph, wouldn't it? A dieting log?"

"Yes. It's not a pie graph like what I used when I did a survey on how people feel about you, Araragi-kun."

"Does such a graph really exist? I'm not sure how that would work. Part of me wants to see it, and part of me doesn't want to…"

"*Like* was 2%, *hate* was 2%, and *I don't care* came in at 96%. There were no other responses."

"I didn't want to see it! It could have at least been *hate* at 96%."

"Indeed. I submitted an answer to the survey as well."

"Which did you answer? I'm not sure how I feel about that 'no other responses' part either."

---

[219] A reference to the long-running Japanese cooking manga series *Oishinbo*. The main character, Yamaoka Shirou, is a food critic working in the newspaper *Touzai Shimbun*. This newspaper has a division called *Touzai Graph*, for which another character, Niki Mariko, writes a weekly pictorial magazine.

[220] Kaibara Yuuzan is Shirou's father and rival, and Kurita Yuuko is Shirou's coworker.

"Proper diet and exercise will of course lead to good health, but at some point your line graph would stop having ups and downs and just become a straight line. Like a heart monitor."

"The person in your comparison is dead. Not from starvation, I assume. Are you talking about plateaus?"

"Perhaps not in the sense of stagnation. But I suppose that, for that person, maybe that point is where they found a balance that indicates it's their ideal weight."

"Then isn't that good enough? Isn't that the final goal of dieting? To maintain your ideal weight."

"But what if we compare it to something else. Let's say that for Araragi-kun the 'ideal test score' is 50 points. Would you be satisfied with having reached that?"

"Who has an ideal score of 50? And don't phrase it as if your beloved lover worked really hard just to achieve the average."

"My ideal weight is 50 kilograms, and that doesn't make sense. Just like limiting food intake doesn't make sense."

"So now you're just outright saying your weight."

"Now that I am suffering under it personally, I have come to realize just how damaging it is that women cannot talk about their weight. Having to hide your own weight in such a manner is like saying 'this is something that must be concealed', which implies that 'this is something bad'. It creates a taboo and makes a person reject a part of themselves and have low self-esteem. Look, I have a high IQ, so I also have a high weight."

"Don't interweave this with your own self-masochism. Is this an interwoven graph? That would be a violently fluctuating graph for sure. Don't put such highs and lows on your self-esteem. Also, you're tall; isn't that the real reason you're heavy?"

"Still, if I explicitly state my weight I want to be told that I'm slim."

"So we're bound by these social norms all the same, huh."

"At this point I can't help but think fondly of back when the Crab of Weight made me weigh a mere 5 kilograms. I only weighed one tenth of what I weigh now. Imagine the shift on the line graph from that change?"

"It would be almost a perfect right angle."

"Maybe I should see if I can go back to that. I'll ask the crab."

"'Danger past, God forgotten'.[221] You're scaring me with that kind of talk. It wasn't that carefree of an episode, was it? Your Crab of Weight. It was deadly serious. It was so deadly serious that just calling it 'deadly serious' seems like an understatement. Remember what it was like? You only weighed 5 kilograms, so you had to hide your weight from everyone around you. You had to go to such extreme measures to conceal your weight that you didn't interact with anyone and spent two years all alone."

"Maybe if I play up those memories of that period with the Crab of Weight it will help me with my dieting."

"I know it's hypocritical for me to say this with how much I abuse my vampire physiology, but don't even joke about that. The crab would foam at the mouth and fall over."

"I want to be a magical girl who can magically control her weight."

"A magical girl born from a societal-pressure-induced weight complex."

"Just as Araragi-kun took on immortality traits from Shinobu-san, I can have the power to remove weight just like the crab. Using my special crab pincer."

"In that situation the pincer would be used to take weight from others."

"I want that. The Crab of Weight's 'mass-deprivation ability'."

"Don't try to make it sound cool. Don't call body weight 'mass'."

"What. You can't even explain the difference between mass and weight."

"I would like to say 'of course I can explain that', but I'm not sure if I can explain it sufficiently to a person who is insurmountably smarter than me. If I start trying to give a lecture with my patchwork knowledge, I'd quickly be intellectually outweighed."

---

[221] The original proverb is 喉元過ぎれば熱さを忘れる (*nodomoto sugireba atsusa wo wasureru*, "once it's past the throat, one forgets the heat [of the swallowed object]").

“What? Did you just compare my mass to that of a mountain? Are you saying that you have a mountain of things to say about me and my weight?”

“Oh no, she’s having victim delusions.”

“Maybe I’ll use the Crab of Weight’s ‘thought-deprivation ability’ to make you forget my weight.”

“Don’t learn to use such a thing. Thought-deprivation? How scary… Maybe the first aberration to appear was the strongest after all. I couldn’t have fought that for two years.”

“I guess a more accurate name would be memory-deprivation ability.”

“That sounds scary too… But even if you had the mass-deprivation ability, in the case of what the Crab of Weight did, it changed your weight but had zero effect on your figure, right? Even if your memories were taken, chunks of your brain were not removed from your head.”

“Oh. I didn’t consider that. You’re right that no matter how much weight I may gain, if I had three-sizes like Hanekawa it would be perfectly fine.”

“Don’t just casually imply that Hanekawa weighs a lot.”

“This is a girls’ fight. You might also call it a girls’ night.”[222]

“Those aren’t the same thing at all. Aren’t you the one having a descent into darkness? If you want to change your figure, then I’ve heard it’s better to take full-body photos every day and compare them instead of making a line graph.”

“I see. Now that would be a Hitagi Graph. How surprising. It wasn’t the mention of crime that was foreshadowing, but instead it was the reference to the Touzai Graph.”

“The Touzai Graph was only referenced because you wanted to reference it. But okay, okay. Well perhaps Hanekawa is self-conscious about her own figure, in which case I would be happy to act as a photographer to help her do a self-esteem-boosting swimsuit gravure photoshoot.”

---

[222] Hitagi abbreviates 女子の戦い (*joshi no tatakai*, “girls’ battle”) as 女子会 (*joshikai*, “girls’ night out”).

"When that happens I'll publish you in the Hitagi Graph."

"Bikini Hanekawa?"

"Don't say it like 'Black Hanekawa'. And I was obviously talking about publishing the 'too bizarre to be real' photograph of Araragi-kun stabbed to death with the point of a line graph in a back alley. Turns out we didn't fulfill any foreshadowing after all, instead we only filled a body bag."

"*Turn the bottom of the ship into your back and be flooded with righteousness.*"

"Your dying message isn't very good."[223]

"If you said that to me after I'd died, my heart would be more broken than the line graph of my EKG."[224]

---

[223] Koyomi's dying message is 船底を背とする浸々の義. If you turn the bottom of the ship (船底, *sentei*) into your back, then the top of the ship (船上, *senjou*) is (が, *ga*) the stomach (腹, *hara*). The last part, "flooded with righteousness" (浸々の義, *hitahita no gi*), gives us the sounds for *hitagi*.

Thus, the culprit is Senjougahara Hitagi.

[224] In Japanese, "line graph" is 折れ線グラフ (*oresen gurafu*, "broken line graph").

SURUGA BASKET

Bakemonogatari Manga vol. 17 Special Edition
17 May 2022

Translation: Tigoris Translates

"My revered Araragi-senpai. It might be rude for me to ask a person as great as yourself a question such as this, but I wish to know if my revered Araragi-senpai knows the origins of the name 'basketball'?"

The question was asked of me by my esteemed junior Kanbaru during an after-school one-on-one basketball match in the gym. By the way, this match of ours consisted of Kanbaru keeping her bandage-wrapped monkey's paw behind her back and using only her right hand to control the ball, while I had just had my blood sucked by Shinobu the night before and my vampiric physiology was as high as it could be while still leaving me able to function as a human. The match was as handicapped in my favor as it could possibly be in both human and vampire terms. It seems strange to me to call this a match or a battle, but unfortunately it really was a good match.

"The origins of basketball… I feel like I've heard something about that. Maybe Hanekawa told me about it? Most of the things that I know come from that exemplary specimen of a class president."

"Hanekawa-senpai is saddled with a great burden."

"Right, so I believe it used to be that for basketball the goal was literally a basket? So it's a sport where people compete to throw a ball inside of a bucket-like goal that's typically a basket… and so it's basketball."

I imagine during those early days of the sport it must have been a pain to constantly fish the ball back out of the basket each time… And eventually they must have just taken the bottom out of the bucket—much as one would do to a *hishaku* to combat a *funayuurei*[225]—and then the ball would fall back out of the bucket or basket once it had gone in. And I guess at some point further on they went to using a hoop with a net?

"That's exactly right. Just what I'd expect from Araragi-senpai. Bringing up the *funayuurei* and the *hishaku* shows quite extensive knowledge."

"I figured I should mention something touching on an aberration."

"Looks like you're ready to graduate from Hanekawa-senpai."

"How scary! Stop trying to make me graduate from Hanekawa."

Hanekawa and Kanbaru don't really run in the same circles, so it seems that she probably has no idea just how prominent Hanekawa is.

"And when I talk about the prominence of Hanekawa I don't mean her boobs being prominent."[226]

"Could you be expelled from Hanekawa-senpai?"

"It's only a matter of time before I matriculactate again."[227]

"I like how you've referenced milk as your means of talking about her breasts, as if you were only trying to talk about a beverage which is good

---

[225] A *funayuurei* (船幽霊, lit. "boat spirit") is a spirit that became a vengeful ghost at sea. It's believed to use a *hishaku* (柄杓), a ladle-like tool, to fill boats with water in order to sink them. Therefore, preparing one with its bottom missing would thwart the spirit.

[226] Pun between "important" (重要, *juuyou*) and "heavyweight" (重量, *juuryou*).

[227] In the original, Koyomi uses the verb "enroll" (入学, *nyuugaku*), and adds "Replace the 入 (*nyuu*, "enter") in 入学 with the 乳 (*nyuu*, "breast") from 牛乳 (*gyuunyuu*, "milk").".

for building strong bones and not saying anything weird. I could learn from you."

My junior is quick to catch on. And I don't want her to learn from me.

"It's like they say, 'the tailor's wife is the worst clad'."[228]

"You say that as if it means something profound here, but it doesn't really fit, aren't you just trying to find a saying to fit into the conversation?"

I tried to make her respect me a bit more, but she saw right through me. She might have even realized that I'm trying to get her to respect me more. So what's this about basketball? She apparently already knew the answer, so the real point of the question must be beyond the scope of the original question.

"Mhm. So it's just as you said, Araragi-senpai. Long ago they used a basket, and then it became a tube or pipe, and now it's a ring with a net hanging from it. I think that's good. For instance, if we were still using a basket and I went to do a dunk, I would rip apart the hoop of the basket and it would fall apart into tiny pieces."

"And why am I playing basketball one-on-one against a girl with that much destructive power contained in only one hand?"

It's a surprise to hear her talking about dunking when she's playing with a one-hand handicap. Her left hand would be one thing, but to do it with her right… Just how much grip strength does she have?

"But it also makes me wonder… Is this even still basketball?"

Oh.

I hadn't thought that far ahead. I'm not sure if I learned about this from Hanekawa or not, but I did know the origins of the name basketball from one source or another, and I had never once bothered to think any more beyond that.

And certainly, at the point where the goal was a basket with the bottom taken out it could still be called basketball, but now with a ring and a net

---

[228] Originally 駕籠舁き駕籠に乗らず (*kagokaki kago ni norazu*, "a palanquin bearer does not ride their own palanquin").

there's no "basket" left in any form. Nobody looking at what is used now would think of a basket. This isn't basketball at all. It's netball.[229]

"Sports rules change through the ages, but once something so fundamental changes you would think that it would change the identity of the sport itself… I guess that's like saying 'it's too cruel to set fire to the tanuki in *Kachi-kachi Yama* so let's not do it'."[230]

I wanted to come up with a good example like the *funayuurei* to compare the situation to, but now that I think about it, *Kachi-kachi Yama* is a story for children, not a ghost story. I think the story is scary enough to fit the bill anyway. That tanuki and rabbit are both terrifying.

"I'm sure they kept the name 'basketball' because it was already firmly affixed to the sport, but if we look at it from another angle, I have to wonder if anyone questioned the decision to change from a basket to a net when they first did it."

"Hmm, but you know, this isn't the only sport like this. Baseball is no longer played in a field,[231] but instead is played on a carefully maintained ground specifically for the game. And the pros play in special domes where not only the ground is carefully maintained, but even the wind and other conditions are controlled. And they call soccer 'football', but now it's a sport that is more focused on coordination and strategy than how well you can kick a ball. It's more about your head than your feet."

"Especially with heading being used."

---

[229] Incidentally, netball actually exists as a ball sport similar to basketball, as it originated from a misinterpretation of the rules of basketball before developing independently.

[230] *Kachi-kachi Yama* (かちかち山, lit. "Fire-Crackle Mountain"), also known as *The Farmer and the Badger*, is a folktale in which a troublesome tanuki is captured by a farmer who wants to cook it. The tanuki then gets the farmer's wife to free it, before killing her and serving her remains in a soup to her husband. Later, a rabbit friend of the couple swears to avenge this death, and among other methods of torture, badly injures the tanuki by setting it on fire.

[231] The word for "baseball" is 野球 (*yakyuu*, lit. "field ball").

I don't think she used her head before adding that comment. Kanbaru is good with using her legs, but apparently she didn't know much about soccer. Speaking of using your head and heading… Research shows that heading can have negative effects on brain development in children. Apparently, if you use heading too much you can end up essentially punch-drunk… So to change the name to 'headball' doesn't make sense.

"It's a lot like *youkan*. They don't use sheep to make it anymore, but the name is still the same, Araragi-senpai."[232]

"Huh? *Youkan* was made from sheep?"

It seems my junior is more knowledgeable than I thought. *Youkan* is written with the kanji for "sheep" and "hot broth", so… that does lead to the question of what is the "hot broth". Hmm… I know it makes you blow on your *namasu*.[233]

"*Namasu*… Is that like, *that namasu*?"

"You can make *namasu* too."[234]

The junior did not refute the words of her senior.

"Oh yeah, and with pandas, apparently the lesser panda was discovered first. But when the giant panda was discovered, it had such an impact that now when you say 'panda' that is what you think of first."

"Is that also knowledge from Hanekawa-senpai?"

"No, that one was Hachikuji."

Using pandas to draw me in, that fifth grade girl is pretty clever as well.

---

[232] *Youkan* (羊羹) is a Japanese confection made from red bean paste, agar and sugar. As Suruga points out, it was originally made from the gelatin derived from boiling sheep.

[233] *Namasu* (膾) is a dish made from raw fish or meat and vegetables. Koyomi is referring to the saying 羹に懲りて膾を吹く (*atsumono ni korite namasu o fuku*, "learn from the hot broth, blow on the namasu"), meaning that after burning your tongue with hot food you will blow on even a cold dish just to be safe.

[234] *Namasu* can be written as 膾 when made from meat, and as 鱠 when made from fish, although the fish variant is also often called 魚膾 (*sakana namasu*, "fish namasu").

"Anyway, there's a part of me that wants to say, 'Hey shouldn't this be called *netball*?'[235] But then I consider soccer, ice hockey, handball, and lacrosse… and all of those would be 'netball' as well."

With lacrosse they even carry sticks with nets on them.

"Did you know that in Chinese the kanji for 'netball' refers specifically to tennis?"[236]

"I wonder if that's referring to the net on the racket or the one on the court."

If basketball were to be renamed, then where would you look to determine its new name? What defines basketball most? Is it the dribbling? Passing? Shooting?

"Since the net is a simplified stand-in for a basket, then what about calling it 'simple basket', Araragi-senpai?"

"I think the number of people playing it would plummet… I guess if we were to step back and look at the bigger picture, a basket is woven from strands of plant material in a net-like pattern, so using a net as a basket replacement isn't exactly wrong."

"I don't want you to get the wrong idea, Araragi-senpai. I'm not saying that we need to go back to using baskets for goals in order to play proper basketball."

"Oh, well that's good, because even if you really wanted to impress that desire on me, I wouldn't be able to help you. I don't have the power necessary to make something like that happen."

"I bring this up since yesterday I was thinking about how it must feel to have the core of your identity changed, but having your name alone still remains the same."

So she was thinking about this yesterday.

I wish she'd thought about it a bit more so she could present it properly. With this kind of deep topic, it's easy to get your wires crossed talking

---

[235] He suggests both a kanji spelling of 網球 (*amikyuu*) and an English loanword ネットボール (*nettobooru*).

[236] The Chinese word for "tennis" is 网球 (*wangqiu*), where 网 is the kanji for "net".

about it. A tiger dies and leaves behind a hide. A person dies and leaves behind a name. And the legendary aberration-killing vampire lost even her name.

Names represent the body.

That's probably what Oshino would say.

Just as Kissshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade was renamed to Oshino Shinobu, and as a cat Hanekawa Tsubasa was named Black Hanekawa, we are all bound by our names. Names bind us hand and foot as surely as a net.

"Well, it's not as if human beings grow up to fit the names that their parents have given them. My grandfather gave me my name, but nowadays the meaning of 'koyomi' only makes people think of calendars that they keep forgetting to flip."

"I don't mean to speak out of line, but you're being too self-deprecating, my most-respected Araragi-senpai."

"On that note, the name Suruga is a great one. I'd like to trade you my Koyomi. The names both work for male and female, so why don't we swap? Araragi Suruga and Kanbaru Koyomi."

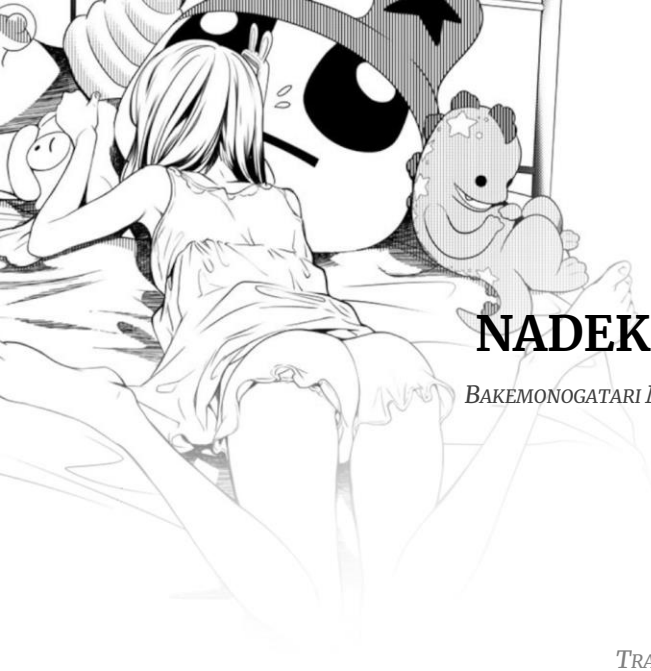
"Are you trying to use some weird angle to propose to me? There's no point in changing names while leaving our natures untouched. But if it's what Araragi-senpai wants… I am not unwilling to bare my name and my body."

And with that, Kanbaru didn't go for a one-handed dunk, but instead she did a sort of fadeaway into a one-handed three-point throw—that cut a perfect trajectory across the gym, and after bouncing once on the ring, swished through the net.

… Huh?

Couldn't you play basketball just as well with just the ring and no net?

The rules, the essence, and even the names change. No net exists that cannot be slipped through. Not even a safety net.



NADEKO DINOSAUR

Bakemonogatari Manga vol. 18 Special Edition
17 August 2022

Translation: Tigoris Translates

"Koyomi-onii-chan. Nadeko's Koyomi-onii-chan knows everything, right? Then I want you to tell me something… Is it true that dinosaurs were killed by a meteorite?"

"I don't know everything, I just know what I know. But let's see… According to my limited knowledge, that is what people say happened to them. It's not as if I saw what happened with my own eyes to be able to verify that for you…"

Guess I'll ask Shinobu about it. Though I really doubt that she's been around since the Cretaceous Period.

"I see. Just as I expected from my Koyomi-onii-chan. You're so knowledgeable. But that's so unlucky. I feel bad for the dinosaurs. To die off in such a low-probability natural disaster…"

"Hm?"

I could feel that we were somehow not on the same page. Certainly, having a massive meteorite fall from the sky above and shatter the glorious peace and tranquility of the world would be the most unlucky event that

could possibly happen… But wasn't there something odd in the way that she said it?

"I mean, it's not something a person would ever really even consider, Koyomi-onii-chan. A meteorite coming down from space to land on your head."

"Do you think that a meteorite fell down and landed on the heads of the dinosaurs, Sengoku-san?!"

"I guess it could have hit them in the heart too. … Dinosaurs had hearts, right?"

Paleontology has been making steady progress over the years, and more recently they've come to think that dinosaurs had feathers, and their backs bent more like a cat's instead of being straight and flat, but one thing that hasn't changed in that time is the assumed existence of a heart… And this has to be the first and only time that it's been proposed that dinosaurs went extinct because of meteorites falling and striking them all in the heart.

"The probability of that happening is beyond astronomical. Millions of meteorites falling from space to strike every single dinosaur and make them go extinct? Was it some kind of space-rock machine gun?"

"Mhm. That's why I say they were unlucky."

"That's a lot more than unlucky."

"Hmm."

That can't be the end of the conversation, right? We can't just leave this topic with that as the ending. I have to stick to it and keep going… I do remember hearing a story from Hanekawa about a hawk or an eagle catching a turtle and then dropping it from the sky—and it just so happened to strike a poet in the head,[237] but… Regardless of whether it's the Cretaceous Period or present day, meteoroids are constantly entering Earth's atmosphere and the vast majority of those meteors burn up before reaching the surface, but a few do make it to the surface to become

[237] This is referring to the death of Greek playwright Aeschylus, often considered to be the father of tragedy.

meteorites which could potentially hit a person or dinosaur and kill them. That possibility does exist.

"But Koyomi-onii-chan, if the dinosaurs weren't killed by a meteorite hitting them directly, then why did they go extinct?"

"Ummm, well it was a very large meteorite, so when it hit the Earth it created a massive cloud of debris that completely filled the atmosphere with dust and smoke. That cloud blocked the light of the sun and created an ice age…?"

This Koyomi-onii-chan, who does not know everything, was reaching the limits of his knowledge, but I was pretty sure that's what I'd heard.

"And because reptiles are weak to cold, they declined, and then after that the age of the mammals came?"

"Well now mammals are suffering because of global warming, so it's not all good. I guess if another meteorite hit Earth we wouldn't have a global warming problem anymore?"

Of course that would also cause the extinction of humanity. How cold.

"I wonder which is better."

"What do you mean? Death from too much heat versus too much cold?"

"Not that. I mean would it be better for a meteorite to fall and hit you on the head or to fall somewhere far away."

"Well of course for it to fall far away. Oh, but I'm not saying it's fine if it falls and kills people I don't know in a place I've never been, but I just mean wouldn't it be better if it fell in the ocean or in some wasteland where nobody lives?"

"But even if the meteorite hit a place where absolutely nothing lives, wouldn't humanity still die?"

"Yeah, if it's a big enough rock that hits."

Let's set aside whether a place completely devoid of life exists on the planet, because if a meteorite like that landed, then the entire surface of the planet would become a place matching that description. In blockbuster movie terms, it wouldn't be only humanity that died out, but all life on the planet. If the rock that impacted the planet was big enough, the entire planet might be broken into countless tiny moons drifting through space.

"So in the end, isn't a small meteorite hitting you in the head the same as all of humanity going extinct?"

"Mmm…"

In a way they are the same thing, but they're also not the same… Now, obviously, there is a big difference between only yourself dying and all of humanity dying, but I get what she's trying to say.

If you die, then you are no longer able to perceive the world in any way, so for you it's the same as if the entire world were destroyed. And again, that's only true for that person… But for that one person, there is no difference between a small meteor hitting them in the head and a big meteor landing far off.

"But I guess if we talk in realistic terms, the probability of a big meteor landing far off is much higher."

Whether it is fortune or misfortune, "great things" or "extraordinary things" tend to happen far away from me without my knowledge of them, and all that I experience is the aftermath of what has happened. Whether that aftermath be a shock wave, a cloud of dust, a smoke cloud that blocks the sun… or the polar ice caps melting and the ocean rising, or a tectonic plate in the ocean floor shifting.

And it's not only natural events that can do this. Someone can decide to create a rule or someone else can break a rule and suddenly my daily life is in danger. None of those things were aimed at me specifically, but historical events like a meteorite striking the planet's surface… and the world is destroyed before anyone even knows it. We can't cope with the possibility of such a historic and astronomical method of destruction like being struck on the head by a falling meteorite.

"Right, and if we talk about aftermaths, then Nadeko being wrapped in the snake curse certainly had an aftermath. An aftermath of a major case of fraud."

"Hm. For me, that hellish spring break and even the nightmarish Golden Week weren't things that I would compare to being struck directly on the head from above."

Those happened long ago. They ended long ago.

Araragi Koyomi could only watch those events happen from afar and he had certainly gone extinct.

"Really? You seem to be living well enough to me, Koyomi-onii-chan. And it's thanks to you being alive that Nadeko was also able to avoid destruction."

"Mm. Is that how it is? Well I suppose the dinosaurs aren't truly gone either then. They've turned into birds and even now they're still alive."

Life is tenacious.

Like a snake. Like a vampire.

Like a human.

"Wait, Koyomi-onii-chan. Birds are descended from dinosaurs?"

"Seems so. Now they're the ones dropping turtles from the sky. To survive through the ice age they had to evolve over and over again, so it's hard to trace back a direct line."

"I see. So in other words they're related by marriage."

"No. You ruined it."

"Nuh-uh. I dinosaur'd it."[238]

[238] Pun between "ruined" (台無し, *dainashi*) and "dinosaur" (ダイナソー, *dainasoo*).

TSUBASA SHELF

Bakemonogatari Manga vol. 19 Special Edition
17 November 2022

Translation: Tigoris Translates

"Araragi-kun. The two of us are eighteen years old now, so that makes us adults."

"Eh…?"

Are we? Adults? Whoa now, hold on, when did we become adults? I've still been living my life as a naive high school senior who doesn't know anything about the world…

"Hanekawa, please tell me something. If an adult man were to kidnap a lost fifth grader, would that be a crime?"

"That's a crime even if you're not an adult. That's a felony."

"I see… You really do know everything."

"I don't know everything. I just know what I know."

Araragi-kun must learn shame.

That's what I was told.

That's a harsh take.

Well, looking at myself and Hanekawa, the difference between the two of us couldn't possibly be more obvious even though we're the same age.

Age is nothing more than a number. If you were to say that Shinobu is five hundred years old so she has accumulated five hundred years' worth of life experience and knowledge, then you would be absolutely wrong. She's nothing more than a young girl.

What is accumulated over the years is not knowledge, but something more like shame.

"That's it, Araragi-kun."

"? What's it? Are you talking about your affection for me?"

"No. My affection level for you is still falling and hasn't yet reached the bottom."

"I will survive this deep cut."

"Too bad… We obviously can't say that we compare much to Heartunderblade-san's five hundred years, but we have lived eighteen years, and we've accumulated things gradually and sometimes in leaps and bounds. Whether that be shame or not. Adult or not, if you live for long enough, for good or bad, whether you want it or not, your experiences will shape the person that you are, right?"

She wants me to agree with her… But if the person that we are is shaped by some crazy event, then I would not have become a vampire. That which I don't have is what creates my current self.

And what does Hanekawa even mean when she talks about herself? Is she talking about being the class president among class presidents? The serious student? The smartest girl in our year? Or is it perhaps the girl possessed by a cat, Black Hanekawa, that she refers to?

"Hm. Hmm. Yes, but also no. 'Adults don't understand', or 'Adults aren't fair', are things that can only be said while one is a child—that meaning is true—but once you have enough years and experience to become an 'adult', then that sense of criticism, which would be self-critique at that point, doesn't really manifest itself."

"'You're just the same', 'Aren't you just as guilty of that', 'You can't say that', or 'I don't want to hear that from you', are such likely responses which can't be argued against that adults probably don't want to voice such criticisms. Even though a child who is still in the process of forming their

own self has no right to be complaining about someone who has finished that process."

It sounds like the kind of logic where a film critic is able to be a critic *because* they have never made a movie of their own. It's the same with sports. If you have to be an expert in a sport in order to be able to cheer from the spectators' seats, then you've raised the bar too high. If we take it to the next step, a person can only say "Go make a movie if you want to be able to critique movies", because that person is not a film critic themselves. Saying that to a person is basically just a "gotcha!".

"Yes, exactly. I wouldn't say that children are pure and innocent, but compared to an adult, the mistakes and blunders that they've made would certainly be far fewer. Which is why, paradoxically, they are exactly the right group to offer a personal opinion in regard to adults who have lived a long life full of mistakes."

A life full of mistakes.

Whether you call it a failed human being, a demon, or an aberration… In the end it's a tale of a human being.

A human tale.

Then following that idea, there is something wrong with saying "Ah, so young, you'll be this way one day as well". There's definitely something wrong with that. I don't want to be that kind of adult.

"A person will reach a point in their life where they realize that things they said before, without hesitation and based entirely on an intuitive feeling for their reality, are now impossible to say because of their own sense of shame. They'll stop and wonder if they have the qualifications to say something like that. The longer they live and the more experience they gain—the more shame they accrue—the more this trend will develop. Which is why it is best to get out there and say what you want to say while you're still young or you may come to regret it."

"I get what you're saying."

Well in reality I probably only understand one hundredth of what Hanekawa is saying. I'm merely skipping across the surface of her meaning and taking the most appealing bits. My level of understanding is like

skimming the grease off the top of a boiling stockpot, so any response that I make is made with, at best, a tenuous grasp of the subject. But that is exactly the kind of "pure and innocent critique" that Hanekawa is talking about.

It is born of pure whiteness.

And Hanekawa isn't the kind of person who would say "Oh, no, I'm nothing special", as some half-hearted placation, instead she is a genius girl who more expresses the idea of "If I am able to do this, then I don't see why you can't do it as well", and expects the impossible from those around her. Assigning a failure to be the class vice president, stopping a desperate suicide attempt—"I'm able to live, so Araragi-kun should also be able to live" is essentially what she said to me during spring break, isn't it?

If anyone were to be qualified to critique a genius, then it would be a fool like myself, wouldn't it…? But it would be troubling if the genius were to stop speaking. Very troubling.

"There should be an opinion which is valid for someone who has accumulated shame over the years to say. That's why, when a person reaches the age of eighteen or twenty, they are given things like the right to vote… And those rights are not given because 'Adults are smart', or 'Your mind should be fairly set by now', but because they're essentially asking 'You should now realize that the adults of the world, including yourself, are not anything all that great, so what will you do now?'."

Something I can say because of my experience as a vampire.

Something Hanekawa can say after being bewitched by a cat.

A girl caught by a crab. A girl made lost by a snail. A girl who wished on a monkey. A girl entangled by a snake.

And a vampire turned into a young girl.

They all have something they can say. Something they want to say.

"Hm. You're right. If you haven't experienced war, then how can you talk about what war is like. But won't people get angry and ask, 'Why are you putting yourself up on a shelf[239] above everyone else?'?"

"Certainly, if I, as a little girl kidnapper, were to start talking on the topic of child abduction, that would be akin to a war criminal talking about war experience. Quite a questionable thing."

"So you admit to kidnapping little girls."

"But I think sometimes people do need to be put up on a shelf to talk about things. Someone who has not become a good adult can still serve as an example of what not to do, even if they can't be an example of what someone should strive to achieve."

Learning from mistakes by reading memoirs definitely has its merits, and the "bag of wisdom" that a grandmother has is held together by experiencing mistakes. So it's not saying "You will become this one day as well", but it should be good to instead say "Don't become like this".

To the youngsters nowadays.

"Putting up on a shelf, huh. I suppose if you're going to take a detailed stock one day that's just fine. So just because a girl likes a worthless boy doesn't mean that she can't warn other girls not to like worthless boys."

"?"

That was an oddly mundane example coming from Hanekawa.

And for a girl like that, it doesn't matter what shelf you put it on, she needs to be warned about worthless boys. Wait, actually, for a pure and innocent boy like me, I can't just let this go.

I, being a pure and innocent boy, was still too much of a child to realize that Hanekawa had placed something far back on a shelf where nobody would see it, instead of placing it high up on a shelf to be admired.

---

[239] The word used is 棚上げ (*tanaage*, "shelving"), in the sense of "keeping something off the market". Here, the way they are using it seems to be akin to "on a high horse", sort of holding yourself outside of the realm of judgment or as if you are worthy of being admired.

SHINOBU NAME

Bakemonogatari Manga vol. 20 Special Edition
17 January 2023

Translation: Tigoris Translates

"Shinobu. Thinking about that name again, Oshino Shinobu, it was Oshino that gave you the name, right?"

"Mhm. After my defeat, in a daring attempt to seal away the great and mighty threat to humanity, that aloha brat named me that. Ka ka!"

For some reason, the little blonde girl spoke arrogantly. If what she said was true, then her great and mighty name had been replaced with a new name that was weak and powerless, and yet still she was arrogant… From Kissshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade to Oshino Shinobu…

"There were other name candidates. Oshino Oshino was one."[240]

"Was he trying to pick your name based on wordplay or rhyming?"

[240] Written as 忍野お志乃, where the kanji used imply a sense of kindness. Meme stated in *Hitagi Crab* that he went with Oshino Shinobu (忍野忍) because he decided to prioritize how it sounded over linguistic uniformity, and that he liked how it resembled Tsubasa's name (羽川翼) in that it had two characters for the last name but just one for the first.

Was he at a bar when he was deciding it? I didn't actually know if Oshino drank alcohol.

"No. The name came from a specialist distilling all of his knowledge to save the world. I'm actually rather fond of it, so if you insult my name, I'll bite your femoral artery, my master."

She called me her master in the same sentence that she threatened to kill me… She pretended to be aiming for the leg, but really she was aiming for my life… Well, in any case, it was one of the most basic rules of interpersonal interaction not to make fun of a person's name.

That didn't change even when dealing with an aberration or whatever a vampire ended up becoming.

"So are you like Oshino's adopted child or something?"

"That's not right at all. Don't say it as if I, who have experienced life in Antarctica, have become the adopted child of Great King Hamehameha of the South Island."[241]

"I didn't say that you were like the child of Great King Hamehameha."

I used to wish that I could be like that… I envied the children of Hamehameha for their lifestyle.

"I don't see what you have to envy, since you already live that life. You get attacked by a cat, and you're late to school. A snake bites you, and you're absent for the day."

"Setting aside the cat, I think anyone would be absent if they were bitten by a snake. Oh yeah… Wasn't the story something about everyone on the southern island that the great king ruled over being named Hamehameha?"

"For one who has lived for an eternity like myself, I can say that it's more unusual for there to be a world overflowing with names that overflow with individuality. Names of the past were usually just scooped up from wherever. And having your existence sealed by a name is not something unique to aberrations."

Hm?

---

[241] A reference to a nursery rhyme of the same name released in 1976, about an island where everyone has the name Hamehameha.

For a moment, it was difficult to understand what she meant, but she was right, even if I couldn't compare myself to the great king of aberrations who had been bound by the name of Oshino, even I was bound in my own way.

The name Koyomi was given to me by my grandfather, and the name I received from my parents was Araragi.

"Well, I could be rid of this unpleasant family name easily by marrying Hachikuji. Starting next year, I'll be Hachikuji Koyomi."

"Why are you planning to marry a fifth grader at the same time that you're graduating high school? Or rather, if you're wanting to marry that lost girl, then you should just marry myself."

"No way. I'd be Oshino Koyomi then."

"So there's no hesitation to toss aside the name of Araragi, is there?"

"No, because it's unpleasant. If given the choice of staying as Araragi Koyomi or that, then I would be willing to take the name of Oshino instead."

Wait, wasn't Hachikuji's family name something else originally as well? When her parents divorced, I believe she changed her name from Tsunade Mayoi to Hachikuji Mayoi…

When I first met her—when I first was accosted by her she was already Hachikuji, so the name Tsunade didn't really mean anything to me, but for her, I wonder which name felt more like her real identity? In her lifetime, she had spent more time as a Tsunade…

"Thinking about it more, I've had fights with my sisters because of our names. Because I was named Koyomi, they say that they were forced to be named Karen and Tsukihi. That because of my name they had to be given similar names."[242]

---

[242] All three siblings have a name related to time. *Koyomi* (暦) is the word for "calendar". *Karen* (火憐) is pronounced like the start of カレンダー (*karendaa*), the loanword for "calendar". The kanji for *Tsukihi* (月火) is also a word pronounced *getsuka*, which refers to "Monday and Tuesday", and the *tsuki* kanji (月) is also used for months.

"That's a sound complaint, if you ask me."

Was this how it felt to be Ichirou and have your younger brother forced into the name of Jirou?[243]

But then, my sisters were also known as the Fire Sisters of Tsuganoki Second Middle School. Fighting to protect the peace of the town was great and all, but the name for their duo had clear origins in the kanji for "fire" that appeared in both of their names.

I wouldn't say that it was all the result of a labeling effect… but the influence of their names was evident.

"Thinking about it from that angle, Oshino giving you a random name is rather difficult to forgive. You could even call it abuse of an adopted daughter."

"I'm not adopted, and he didn't give me a random name. You need to stop."

I'd made the young girl angry.

Even though I said it out of concern for her…

"Are you saying that you don't writhe in pain every night from the desire to escape your Oshino name the way that I writhe in pain over my Araragi?"

"I don't think much of it. A name is nothing more than a symbol or code."

"You say that, but aren't you secretly hurt by it? Having to bear the name of the one who defeated you? Doesn't the shame of it eat at you day after day?"

"You're trying very hard to understand my feelings… which makes you a good master, but it's not wanted."

"Look, I get it. Every time someone calls me Araragi, I am painfully reminded that my life is under the control of my parents."

"That's darker than any aberration. Did you feel that bad whenever the heroines used your name?"

---

[243] Traditional Japanese names are just numbers plus a suffix. For boys, the suffix "*-rou*" is common. *Ichirou* is first-*rou*/son, *Jirou* is next/second-son, *Saburou* is third-son, *Shirou* is fourth-son, and so on.

"When they said my name, I thought about wanting to take theirs."

"Creepy."

"What's wrong with it? Hanekawa Koyomi. Sounds really smart, right? That's the name of a heaven-sent genius child. Araragi Koyomi? Not an ounce of intelligence in that name."

"I think the lack of intelligence has more to do with your tardiness and absences from school…"

"Kanbaru Koyomi. You can feel the personality of that name. I bet someone named that would be setting world records left and right. Sengoku Koyomi. Sounds like a world-famous mangaka who would write nothing but hits and sell billions of copies, right?"

"That name sounds like a world-famous mangaka to you? I'd say that girl with the bangs has as weird a name as your own."

"Ummm… Who else can save me from this horrible family name…"

"I spoke earlier without thinking, but I wouldn't want to marry someone who is only marrying so that they can change their name… It just sounds like the objective is to find a way off a blacklist."

"Isn't that basically what you've done? You've taken on the name of Oshino to convince the specialists that you're not dangerous. You're enduring a difficult trial to achieve your goal."

"I've already told you that I'm fond of the name. It's just a label. Also you're forgetting a rather important heroine."

"My little sisters? Well, I've thought about them, yes, but even if we did get married it wouldn't change my name."

"It scares me that you've considered them."

"In India, they have a festival called *Raksha Bandhan*, where sisters give gifts to their brothers. Why doesn't Japan have that?"

"Because people like you exist. Have you really forgotten her?"

"Ha. I've not forgotten. You're talking about the clear first choice, Senjougahara Koyomi, right? The name sounds so serious that I had to leave it for last. If I had a family name like that I feel like Koyomi would need to be written with hiragana instead of kanji for balance. Senjougahara *Koyomi*."

"Changing it to hiragana makes it seem like a pen name. And not a world-famous one."

"Senjougahara *Koyomi* would sell a million copies. But it's just perfect, isn't it? Senjougahara is proud of her father, unlike myself. When she introduces herself, she practically says, 'I am Senjougahara's daughter, Senjougahara Hitagi'."

"Doesn't ring a bell."

Senjougahara, who wanted to treasure her father's name, and myself, who loathed the name given to me by my parents. In that light, weren't we the best couple? She wasn't just the clear first choice, she was practically a fated partner.

"And just what fate is that?"

"Oh, don't worry, Shinobu. I wouldn't forget about you. When I become Senjougahara *Koyomi*, I'll come and change your name the next day."

"For trying to be a kind master, you're very good at ignoring what your slave has to say."

"Senjougahara Shinobu. How's that?"

"Even if you ask me that… It's not as if you can marry both of us. You said you'd not marry me. And I don't want to marry you."

"Of course, which is why I'll adopt you. You'll be adopted by myself and Senjougahara."

I thought it was a rather good idea, but Shinobu went silent. I really had meant it to be a kindhearted gesture, but maybe I had offended her?

"Ka ka, I suppose that would be a family."[244]

She seemed to be looking off into the distance for a while before laughing with what appeared to be deep emotion—the vampire who had

[244] Shinobu uses the word 眷属 (*kenzoku*), which is also the word used for vampire thralls.

her name stolen and was sealed behind another name… There could be no greater honor than if being with me made her want to stay in this world.[245]

[245] In addition to the two obvious instances of “name” just before, the last sentence also uses the kanji for “name” (名) two more times: one in “honor” (名誉, *meiyo*) and one in “want to stay” (名残惜しい, *nagorioshii*).

KAREN VIOLENCE

Bakemonogatari Manga vol. 21 Special Edition
16 March 2023

Translation: Tigoris Translates

"Nii-chan, answer me if you don't want me to hit you. What is justice?"

If one were to describe Araragi Karen, the bigger of my two little sisters, they had a myriad of ways to go about it. If they viewed her in a positive light, they would say she's honest. In a negative light, she'd be called simple. In a very positive light, one could say she is a genius of sensibility. In a very negative light, she'd be called a good-natured fool.

So the question that she posed, coupled with her threat of physical violence, was very much in character for her, although compared to how she normally was… As the enforcer of the Tsuganoki Second Middle School Fire Sisters, that question was almost entirely unsettling. In fact, it was more unsettling than the word "unsettling" was able to properly convey.

What is justice?

For a hero of justice, that was a question that must not be asked. I'd rather she'd asked me a more wholesome question like "Why can't we just kill people?".

"What's wrong, Karen-chan? Have you finally become an adult? I'll need to buy you a birthday cake and six candles to go on top."

"Who are you calling a six-year-old?"

That she was able to recognize my roundabout statement as sarcasm was, in itself, potential proof that Karen had become an adult. Personally, rather than the question of "What is justice?" I was much more concerned with what had happened to Karen.

"Mhm. Well, you know about 100-man *kumite*?"[246]

"Do I?"

"I've done one of those each week since entering middle school, and just recently I finally reached my long-awaited goal of winning every match."

Winning every match? Meaning one hundred battles and one hundred victories? I knew she was something of a karate kid, but she's been fighting like that every single week?

I had to wonder: what if, during that hellish spring break, instead of myself, Araragi Koyomi, discovering the limbless Kissshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade and becoming a vampire, it had been the larger of my two little sisters? If it had been her, she could likely have beaten the three vampire hunters without breaking a sweat—and she might have even had a fair fight against the King of Aberrations during the final battle.

It really was a tragedy for Kissshot that she had made such a weakling into one of her kin. The pitiable vampire apparently had no standard for judging people.

Even if it wasn't the "usual pair" of them, if it was Karen, then that hellish spring break would have been more like the spring break of Valhalla or something. And that very same foolish little sister was asking me a question like that.

---

[246] In karate, *kumite* (組手) refers to the act of sparring against an opponent as a form of training. A 100-man kumite is an extreme test of endurance, consisting of 100 consecutive rounds of kumite.

"Yes. After winning against everyone but the master, I suddenly thought for the first time. It may have literally been the first time that I thought something."

"So not just the first time thinking about something, but the first time you've had a thought itself?"

"'Do I really need this strength?' is what I thought."

What a thing to question, and with such a straightforward gaze…

Speaking of strength, as if it were her appendix or something…

But maybe that's just how it goes. It's only the wealthy, who have more money than they need, who can stop and say, "Money isn't everything". Someone born into a great family can very easily say, "It's not all about your lineage". Like finally achieving academic credentials and realizing that a society based on them might not be such a good thing.

It was *because* she had defeated a hundred opponents that she was able to ask that question and come to the realization that strength had no meaning.

"No, no, I wouldn't say that it has no meaning at all. It has a meaning, surely. But originally, the reason I began to train was because nii-chan was bullying me. I should have been content once I was stronger than nii-chan, and yet…"

"That was the reason…?"

I couldn't help but feel guilty.

But even if the reason she began was not a pleasant one, she had begun using her strength to support justice, so you could say that all's well that ends well. She didn't go on to use her strength to bully others, continuing the chain of violence.

Violence begets violence.

The winners claimed to be justified while adding links to a chain of losses in which there can be no real victor. By which I mean, if Karen had turned her strength, her violence, on the smaller of my little sisters, Tsukihi, then we would have had a big problem…

"If anything, that cheeky little Tsukihi-chan could do with a few good pokes."

"Domestic Violence Punch!"

Instead, it was the older brother who was poked. Nowadays, detailing that kind of inside joke would be a violation of compliance, so we have to keep things purely literary. It's too bad for any youngsters aiming for the Naoki Prize.[247]

"In other words, it's like this."

"In other words, it's like what?"

"I use violence to stop violence. Isn't that basically continuing the chain of violence?"

"Mm."

So that was it—what they call the "missing link" in mystery novels.

"I had thought that the stronger I became, the more effectively I could deter evil, but in reality, those who do evil have instead worked to become stronger in order to defeat me. They put more and more effort into it and become more and more evil. Small groups of thugs that weren't so bad in the past have joined forces, acquired weapons, and gone underground. Now those groups have spread to other towns and are perpetrating crimes in force. My intention was to defeat evil, but now it seems more like I was forging a katana. The more I strike, the more dangerous it becomes."

Like a demon blade.

It was a great irony that the Fire of the Fire Sisters should become a flame far beyond that of a mere candle and instead be called the fire of a forge. But there was another irony to the situation as well. As Karen stayed true to herself and fought against evil, she was actually being trained and developed by her enemies.

The saying that competition leads to growth was proving itself correct.

The same applied to war.

"I'm not talking about anything that complex."

"Eh? Really?"

---

[247] A biannual Japanese literary prize named after novelist Naoki Sanjuugo, awarding works by rising authors.

"I'm just saying that if people like me who are trying to act as heroes of justice weren't around, then maybe there wouldn't be so much evil. So what exactly is it that I've done? I've created evil and helped it grow, and if that's true, then I can hardly call that justice."

"…"

"Answer me, nii-chan. If you don't want me to hit you. You know everything, don't you, nii-chan?"

My little sister had Hanekawa-levels of trust in me. I felt like that was perhaps the greatest proof of my little sister's naivety and ignorance, but there wasn't an older brother in the world who wouldn't feel good having his little sister rely on him.

"Okay, Karen-chan. Justice is a lot like the truth—"

"If you tell me there are as many versions of justice as there are people on the planet, then I'm going to kick your ass so hard that you fly out into the depths of space. I will remove your portion of justice from this world."

"Scary!"

I didn't realize that the question had my life on the line if I answered poorly… But, well, it wasn't because of what she said that I thought it, but justice and violence were a bit of a package deal. Or perhaps it was better to say that they were two sides of the same coin.

What was the difference between being just and being right?

The skills that Karen had developed in order to carry out justice were much the same as the skills developed to do evil, so I could understand why my plain and simple little sister was feeling conflicted about it. To be entirely honest, I would have felt better if she'd begun to have these doubts sooner—after winning fifteen fights or so—but still, the fact that she had the thought on her own was still praiseworthy. I should commend her.

"If you were to say that being anti-violence is another form of arrogant dominance assertion, then you would be correct. If you look at the court system and criminal punishment from a certain angle, then they too are violent. Anything that has the ability to enforce compliance could be said to be backed by violence. Thus, you could say that justice is the arrogance of those with power. However, Karen-chan…"

"What, nii-chan?"

"In your case, you only need to think about it more simply. Justice means protecting those who are weak."

So that those who were weak could remain that way. Only someone who was strong could do that.

"While you're thinking and philosophizing over the meaning of justice, weak innocents are out there being neglected. Think less about defeating 100 people and instead aim for protecting 100 people. Don't let yourself be occupied with defeating evil people, but instead focus on giving those who are weak their independence."

That was a big load of sophistry, since it was based on the massive assumption that there were no bad people among the weak, but an intermediate-level definition of justice should be appropriate for Karen.

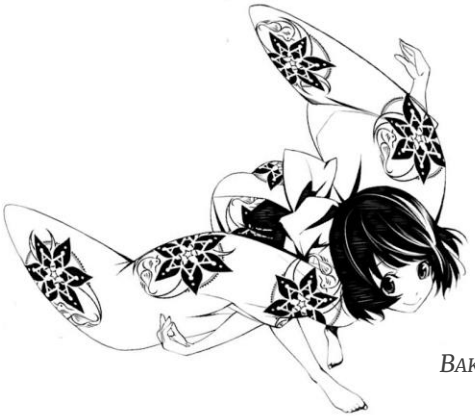
When I was in the first year of high school, I grew frustrated with this definition and went a bit overboard with trying to break it down further, and if Karen had a similar experience awaiting her in her life, then I would be there to help her figure it out again—just as others had done for me.

Advice about *violence*.[248]

If violence could form a chain, then so could justice.

If there was a chain of negativity, then surely there could be a chain of positivity.

[248] Both words are written using katakana: アドバイス (*adobaisu*) and バイオレンス (*baiorensu*), making it sort of wordplay.



TSUKIHI ENDLESS

Bakemonogatari Manga vol. 22 Special Edition
17 May 2023

Translation: Tigoris Translates

"And so, onii-chan, the comicalized *Bakemonogatari* has now come to a perfect end. This is yet another ending in the *Monogatari Series* that seems to be endlessly ending without end. Would you like to examine this repeated occurrence?"

"Don't say that it's endlessly ending. In fact, don't say anything at all."

My adorable little sister, the embodiment of the idea of "pretty", Araragi Tsukihi, voiced a level of meta-commentary that was so far above normal that I honestly felt every fiber of my being become fed up with her. I was using the words "adorable" and "embodiment of pretty" in an attempt to trick myself into continuing the conversation. And to top it off, this was to be the final of these short stories, a series of stories that appeared at the end of each of the 22 volumes of the comic version, and in this final story of the series, the character to appear was not Senjougahara, Hanekawa, or even Shinobu; no, it was *her,* of all people.

"Fufu. That's because I am the character who was born to bring an end to the story."[249]

"That's Ougi-chan."

"I'm not making it up! Look, the second volume of *Nisemonogatari*, *Tsukihi Phoenix*, was the final chapter of the series, wasn't it?"

Hm, she had a point.

I see. It's amazing what a person could forget… Well, perhaps there was a reason to examine the topic with her. I was unusually annoyed to have to go along with her idea, but if we didn't leave behind some kind of record, then the world would have to rely on historians to piece together the answers.

What?

"Umm, well, to start, the name *Monogatari Series* didn't even exist. *Hitagi Crab* was published in the supplementary issue of the light novel magazine *Mephisto* in 2005, and at that time there was no series name… It wasn't even decided if there would be any additional stories to create a series with."

"There must have been some plan to continue, though, right? After all, Karen and I are both in the story."

"At that time, the two of you were twins."

"A remnant of the original idea."

"Originally the plan was to tell the story of Senjougahara, then the story of Hanekawa's Golden Week, and then the spring break with Shinobu—so each story would be another step into the past. But as you know, what actually happened was a series of short stories that continued forward in time with Hachikuji and Kanbaru. In other words, *Mayoi Maimai* and *Suruga Monkey*. And at that point, it ended."

"At the end of the first volume of *Bakemonogatari*? Why?"

"At this point, the magazine that the stories had been published in, *Mephisto*, suspended publication. That's probably because, from an outside

[249] Of course, the word "story" here is 物語 (*monogatari*).

perspective, with the recovery of Senjougahara Hitagi, the story had reached a stopping point."

By the way, the short story magazine *Mephisto* went on to face a variety of challenges, and it changed form to be called *MRC* (*Mephisto Readers Club*), a membership-based newsletter that continued to publish stories.

Just what you'd expect from where I originated. It was undying.

"After that, the stories were published as a single volume, and then the second volume was written all the way through. And as I said before, the stories of Shinobu and Hanekawa didn't end up taking place in the past, but instead *Tsubasa Cat* was published, and, if not for that, it was unlikely that *Nadeko Snake* would have existed."

"How terrifying. It's like looking at an alternate world where my best friend Nadeko-chan never existed."

I had a feeling that Sengoku would feel terrified as well, hearing that she was considered your best friend. Let's just ignore that.

"With *Bakemonogatari* parts 1 and 2 complete, the series had a clean ending point. What came next was the long-awaited story that I talked about earlier, a story taking place in the past, *Kizumonogatari*. At this time, it was called a two-part story."

"The way that they talked about it, *Second Season*, it was more like planting and harvesting two crops in the same year."

"It really didn't feel like that at the time. It felt like the soil might die… However, before that *Second Season* could take place, the aforementioned *Nisemonogatari* volumes 1 and 2 came out. That one was targeted to be a story taking place in the future after *Bakemonogatari* and *Kizumonogatari*. They were meant to be published alongside the announcement of the anime version."

That was likely the first time that the series had the feeling of coming to an end. In the next story, *Nekomonogatari*, the series began to change. To be more specific, it was in this part of the series that other characters began to replace me as the narrator.

"For the more hardcore mystery fans, it was a bit of a difficult change to have the narrator or point of view change around like that."

"Wasn't that an issue from way back when for more traditional mystery stories?"

"Don't call it 'way back when', Tsukihi-tan."

Well, she wasn't wrong. Foreign mystery novels were surprisingly open-minded when it came to "point of view" in stories. It was the difference between a third-person perspective and an omniscient perspective. In any event, in the story that came after *Nekomonogatari (Kuro)* which showed the events of Golden Week in the past, *Nekomonogatari (Shiro)* featured Hanekawa Tsubasa as the narrator, and, for the *Second Season* of the series, the heroine herself would be the one telling the story.

"*Bakemonogatari*, *Kizumonogatari*, and *Nisemonogatari* all had the radical for 'person' in the first kanji of the title, so there were those who called it the *Ninben Series*."[250]

"Nobody called it that, did they?"

"But in *Nekomonogatari*, that first radical of the first kanji changed to that of a beast instead of a person,[251] because the story was about a person turning into an animal. And just as a side comment, it was at this time—in a fanbook made for the release of the *Bakemonogatari* anime—that the first of this style of short story was written."

"Ooh, what a revolutionary event."

It would be nice to have all of the short stories compiled into a single volume, but given their short length, it just wasn't enough to make a book from.[252] This special edition release came with the twenty-second of the stories, and there will no doubt be more of them to come.

"*Nekomonogatari (Kuro)* brought with it the end of the stories from the past that had been planned, but *Nekomonogatari (Shiro)* brought with it the idea of delving into the minds of the heroines, and so in the following

---

[250] *Ninben* is the name of the "person" radical, 亻. It can be seen in the first kanji of 化物語 (*Bakemonogatari*), 傷物語 (*Kizumonogatari*), and 偽物語 (*Nisemonogatari*).

[251] 猫物語 (*Nekomonogatari*) contains 犭, usually called the "dog" radical.

[252] Right.

stories of *Kabukimonogatari*, *Hanamonogatari*, and *Otorimonogatari* the titles included the radical for 'change', and thus began the *Second Season*.[253] The end of that season came with *Koimonogatari*."

"Which doesn't have the radical for 'change'."

"That was the story that broke the rule."[254]

The narrator for *Koimonogatari* was not myself or any of the heroines, and it was at that point that it became clear that literally anything could happen.

"But given the title *Hitagi End* that comes within the story, it definitely had a feeling of finality to it."

"No, but the story pushed ahead fairly quickly into the *Final Season*."

"There's a lot of talk of 'end' and 'final', but the story seemed to have a vitality that defied coming to any sort of ending…"

"Well, the last installment of the *Final Season* was *Owarimonogatari*. Wait, no, it was *Zoku Owarimonogatari* wasn't it."[255]

"Yes, far too much vitality."

That's rich coming from you.

"*Tsukimonogatari*, *Koyomimonogatari*, *Owarimonogatari* parts 1-3, and *Zoku Owarimonogatari* composed the *Final Season*, and then it was revealed that there would be an *Off Season*."

"Well, now that there's an *Off Season*, there'll never be an end to it."

"The *Off Season* consisted of *Orokamonogatari*, *Wazamonogatari*, *Nademonogatari*, and *Musubimonogatari*. The season ended with *Musubimonogatari*."

"That title certainly has a feeling of finality to it. But I bet there's more that comes after, right?"

"There is. The *Monster Season*."

---

[253] The radical for "change" is 化, as seen in 化物語 (*Bakemonogatari*). It's contained in the first kanji of 傾物語 (*Kabukimonogatari*), 花物語 (*Hanamonogatari*), and 囮物語 (*Otorimonogatari*).

[254] 恋物語 (*Koimonogatari*) doesn't contain the "change" radical, but neither does the previous book, 鬼物語 (*Onimonogatari*).

[255] The *owari* part of the title is 終 ("end"), while *zoku* is 続 ("continued").

Aberrations were always largely unknown figures in the stories, so while the heroines could become narrators, you'd never see an aberration as the narrator. However, during the *Off Season*, the line between human and aberration began to blur and become less firm, and so that became the next new territory to explore.

Yoimonogatari, *Shinobumonogatari*,[256] *Amarimonogatari*, *Ougimonogatari*.

And finally, *Shinomonogatari* parts 1 and 2.

"Well, the series didn't end even when the titles had 'final' or 'end' in them, so now it's come to 'death' huh… Aah, but surely the series *did* end here, right, onii-chan? Even if there's an undying vampire or an undying phoenix…"

"With the release of this volume of the manga version of *Bakemonogatari* they're announcing the release of a new novel, *Ikusamonogatari*."

In that sense, perhaps the series itself was turning into some kind of fantastical creature… It wasn't much compared to the 600 years that Kissshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade had lived, but for a novel series to continue for eighteen years, perhaps it, like the short story magazine *Mephisto*, was undying.

"Well, I can only imagine that the next book will be *Koroshimonogatari*."[257]

"Nobody would publish such a violent title. Nobody wants to commit murder just to bring the series to an end."

"Well, I suppose *Kanmonogatari* is still left… Or *Nakimonogatari*, *Momonogatari*, *Oimonogatari*, *Chikumonogatari*, *Naimonogatari*, or *Ushinaumonogatari*?"[258]

---

[256] For some reason, these two titles are not in the right order, as *Shinobumonogatari* came first.

[257] *Koroshimonogatari* is 殺物語 ("Killing Tale").

[258] *Kanmonogatari* is 完物語 ("Complete Tale"). *Nakimonogatari* is 亡物語 ("Deceased Tale"). *Momonogatari* is 喪物語 ("Mourning Tale"). *Oimonogatari* is

"Stop ruining potential titles. I forgot you do that sort of thing."

Or maybe she wasn't spoiling potential titles so much as she was advertising books that didn't exist yet… After all, the *Second Season* and *Monster Season* had begun in a similar style.

"You know, I wouldn't mind doing *Oimonogatari* one day. For personal reasons. But this and that, the anime version, the manga version, it was thanks to all of these things that the series was able to continue in the way that it has. It's allowed the series to live on. I'm very thankful for it."

"The feelings of appreciation will never run out. There definitely won't be a *Tsukimonogatari* any time in the future."[259]

"That sounds like a story with you as the protagonist… But you know, maybe now with the definitive end of the manga version of *Bakemonogatari* the series has finally had its final footnote in history and will finally enter a deep slumber. *Nemurimonogatari*."[260]

"You can't say that, onii-chan. Until the collected volume of all of the short stories is released, we need to live long lives."

True, a life should be long.

The next story in the *Monogatari Series*, *Mijikanamonogatari*.[261]

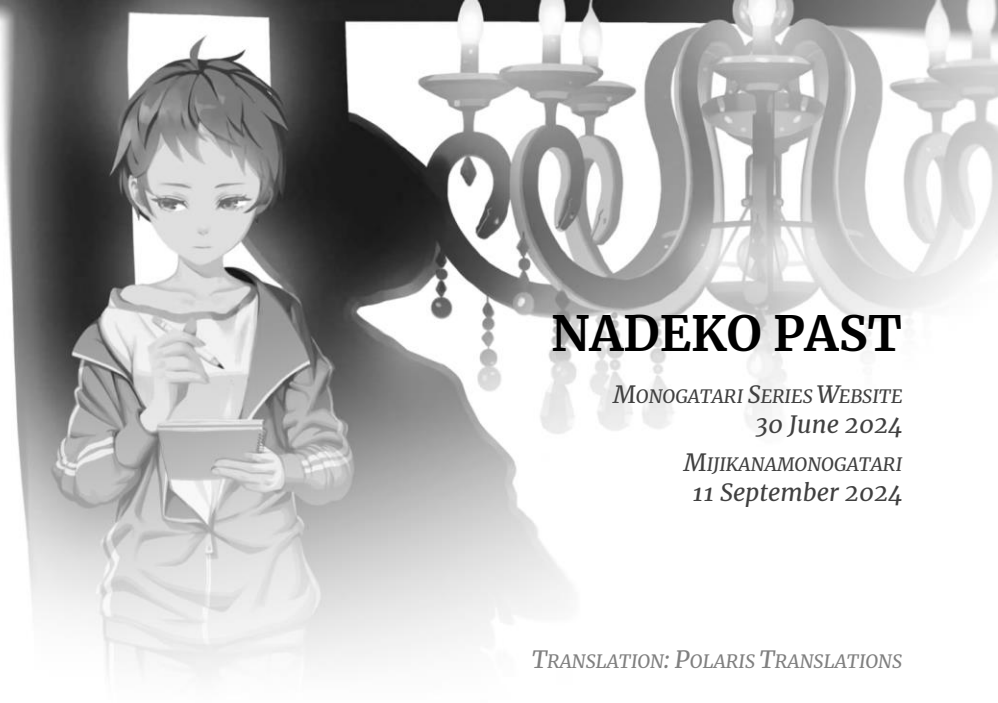
Don't miss it.

老物語 ("Old Age Tale"). *Chikumonogatari* is 逐物語 ("Successive Tale"). *Naimonogatari* is 無物語 ("Nothing Tale"). *Ushinaumonogatari* is 失物語 ("Lost Tale").

[259] Here, *Tsukimonogatari* is 尽物語 ("Ran Out Tale"). It's different from the first novel of *Final Season*, *Tsukimonogatari* (憑物語, "Possession Tale"), and the *March Comes in Like a Lion* crossover story, *Tsukimonogatari* (月物語, "Month Tale").

[260] *Nemurimonogatari* is 眠物語 ("Sleep Tale").

[261] *Mijikanamonogatari* is 短物語 ("Short Tale"). And sure enough, a year after the publication of this story, an actual *Mijikanamonogatari* book gathering short stories was announced, and so we chose to reflect that by renaming our own compilation book.



NADEKO PAST

Monogatari Series Website
30 June 2024
Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Translation: Polaris Translations

"Somehow, I can't get rid of the feeling that I'm constantly in battle with my past self. Like a ghost that's long dead, which I can't touch and don't even want to touch… A past self that's completely see-through."

That was what Sengoku Nadeko said, lying face-up on a sofa with her hands clasped at her stomach—it was not that she had laid herself across the sofa in a discourteous manner, but that the sofa was designed with the assumption that it would be used in that position. I, Ononoki Yotsugi, was beside that sofa, or perhaps beside that Sengoku Nadeko, sitting in a swivel chair and taking notes on a chart held in a clipboard.

In other words, we were playing by having a pretend therapy session. Since Sengoku Nadeko was a target of observation, I could say that it was natural as a specialist for me to conduct an interview with her, but if it was indeed natural, then there was no need for me to say it.

"Your past self. Could you be referring to the episodes of when you were an idiot?"

"Don't call me an idiot. And besides, it's not like I'm all that smart right now, either. If anything, I feel like I've been getting dumber ever since I stopped going to school."

"School isn't a place to make your intelligence better, you know."

"Hearing that makes me feel…"

"School is a place to make your life better."

"Absolutely terrible."

Thinking about it, I was an aberration without any emotions. There was no work in this world that was more unsuited for me than therapy. And perhaps even in the next world.

The hearts of humans were shrouded in darkness for me.

Though that might be true for anyone.

"Basically, you're saying that you feel like you're being compared to the version of you with long bangs, who was cute and pampered, and that's become a complex for you?"

"So you do get it, after all!"

"No matter how hard you work, no matter how much you devote yourself, no matter how much you strive to change yourself, you feel like you'll never be able to surpass the version of you that was completely spoiled just by being there, without having to do anything. That's what you're saying, right?"

"No, I didn't want to go that far, and after hearing you go that far, it actually makes me want to protect my fleeting past self, instead. I'm fully aware that that version of myself was desperate in her own way, you know?"

"This was back when you didn't refer to yourself pretentiously with 'I', and instead went around constantly crying out your given name, right?"

"I didn't constantly cry out."

Mm, ngh, moaned Sengoku Nadeko on top of the sofa—as though groaning in her sleep from a nightmare.[262] Could she perhaps be trying to

[262] While both 唸る (*unaru*) and 魘される (*unasareru*) mean "to moan/groan", the latter is generally only used in the context of crying out in one's sleep.

confront the hard memories of her past, as though undergoing regression hypnosis?

Rather than hard, they were painful memories.

Not that I knew pain.

"Though I may easily get influenced by my surroundings, I'm ultimately a corpse that fundamentally does not experience change, so your feelings are hard to understand. But it's not really a bad thing to confront your own past like that, right?"

"It's not confronting my own past, but confronting my past self that's so tiresome."[263]

"What kind of rhetoric is that?"

"Calling her a ghost might've been going too far, but basically, no part of my past self exists within me anymore. And yet from the perspective of those around me, it's like that version of me is still firmly in place. It's like I'm the one that's see-through, and they're seeing through me and looking at the version of me from early on."

A mental image of her that had become fixed in place.

That was essentially the unchangeability of monstrous apparitions—I'd never heard of a vampire whose status would change depending on what day it was.

Or, I suppose, depending on what night it was.

Though I suppose their condition could change if it was the full moon or the new moon. Then again, if they were weak to the sun, it made more sense for the full moon to be more difficult for them than the new moon.

"However, it is human nature to seek constancy in a subject. The act of detaching your past self from your present self, when viewed from outside, is often called, 'going out of character'."

"Are you telling me that I shouldn't grow up?"

---

[263] A bit tricky to word this naturally in English. Nadeko compares 自分の過去 (*jibun no kako*, "the past of myself") to 過去の自分 (*kako no jibun*, "myself of the past").

"Of course not. From my point of view, aging is something to be envied."

I hadn't meant to lie, but that wasn't exactly the truth. Because "envy" was an emotion that I didn't possess. "Envy" could be connected to the feeling of, "I want to be like this", and thus was close to a desire for change.

There was no way I could have something like that.

I wasn't a magical girl, after all.

"Even so, wouldn't you say that you wanted your beloved Koyomi-onii-chan to stay as he was in the past? That you wanted him to always remain the same person?"

Though I could say that that wish had come true, ironically enough. After having turned partway into a vampire, that guy was able to maintain a constancy unbecoming of humanity—in fact, it is my opinion as a specialist that that is directly linked to his incomprehensible obstinacy, and it has produced the troublesome side effect of him being unable to change his point of view.

"I dunno. At the very least, when we met again, I might have had the feeling that I wanted him to see how much I'd grown."

"However, all that blockhead was able to see was, ultimately, the version of you from elementary school. Your romantic feelings were one thing, but he failed to notice your jealousy and fury, your laziness and your cunning, all of those unsightly emotions that are natural to have."

Well, if there was one small thing that I could sympathize with oni-no-onii-chan on, it would be that it was pretty difficult to change one's first impression of someone. No matter what she did, Sengoku Nadeko could never be more than "his sister's friend" to oni-no-onii-chan—it was hard to change that mental image once it had settled in. Like how ripping open a tamper-evident seal would still leave traces on the label.

"That's true. I'm not trying to take back what I said, but there was a time where I actually played up the part of my past self more than necessary in front of that guy. Or, like, I let it possess me—"

"In that case, if it's a matter of if you would have been able to captivate that blockhead if you'd let your murky inner thoughts come to the

forefront, then it probably wouldn't have been possible. Basically, I think that by allowing the past to possess you, by acting out your younger self, you've actually benefited."

"I see what you mean. But isn't there something wrong about benefiting from my past glory? Doesn't that make it seem like my current self is being provided for by my past self?"

"Feeling possessed is one thing, but feeling supported can be pretty tough. But that sort of inferiority complex comes from the fact that you haven't managed to surpass your past self, right? It's true that the feeling of 'things used to be better back then' is usually just a nostalgia-tinted misapprehension, but it's not necessarily the case that a renewal or an upgrade will always be a vector pointing in a better direction. There's stuff like that for you, too, right? Like manga that you liked in its early days, even before the art got better."

"There is, yeah."

Sengoku Nadeko looked up toward the sky—or so I would have said, except she'd been in a face-up position from the beginning.

"I hate when it's done to me, but I'm doing the same thing to the masters that I highly respect, huh. Thinking about it like that, I'm not very decent, am I? As I am right now. The way my past self read manga was so much cuter. She was able to enjoy manga, just for being manga."

"Also, there are also cases where a seven-year-old novel will get adapted into an anime rather than any of the newest works, right?"

"You shouldn't say that."

"Do you want to go back to the past?"

"What?"

"If you could go back to being your past self, would you? You never know, I could have that sort of power."

I didn't.

A power that could turn back time—the former Heartunderblade had once used it to travel through time, but from what I knew, that was little more than a game to transport one's current self into the past.

"It's like that psychology test of, if you were to redo your life, what age would you want to start at? Would you say you peaked in your second year of middle school, and choose that period, or would you choose your second year of elementary school? Would you want to go all the way to your past life before you were born? Or would you want to not even be born?"

"That's a difficult question. How philosophical."

"It's just small talk. Besides, most people peaked in their second year of middle school."

"Instead of going backwards, I do have the desire to skip forwards in time. To around forty years old. An age where there would be nothing new in life."

"But there are new things. Of course there would be, for someone in their forties. There are new things even for the tsukumogami of a corpse that's lived for a hundred years. Well, there may not be anything new for a vampire that's lived for six hundred years."

"Then, I'd like to skip to being six hundred years old."

"But once you're six hundred years old, won't you just find yourself thinking, 'Things were better when I was fifteen, I used to shine so bright back then'?"

"Hmm."

I'd meant it as a joke, but Sengoku moved her hands clasped at her stomach to a crossed-arms position.

"From the perspective of my future self, my present and past selves would seem like one big jumble, huh?"

she said.

"Even though I feel like I've changed, I'll end up being the same. Though I think that I've grown from experiencing something big, it'll end up just getting averaged out with what came before and what comes after, won't it."

My past self isn't an enemy.

It's more like a mirror, which reflects light but a moment later.

It seemed she'd come to her own conclusions, but it surprisingly wasn't that far off the mark—after all, a mirror was an indispensable tool for

putting on makeup, for brushing your teeth, or for straightening up your personal appearance.

Without it, you couldn't change your present.

As long as you think about wanting to change the past, you won't be able to grow. What you should be changing is your present self.

If you want to change.

If you're under the impression that you're battling it out, then your goal should not be victory, but reconciliation.

"To put it another way, the fact that you feel that your past self is like a ghost is a sign that your present self has properly managed to change. For better or worse."

"It wouldn't be any good to have changed for the worse, right?"

"It's fine even if you did change for the worse."

Even if it's cheaper, even if it's worse.[264]

Instead of processing the past, it's a sign that the present is alive and well.[265]

---

[264] A modification of 安かろう悪かろう (*yasukarou warukarou*, lit. "the cheaper it is, the worse it is"). The phrase is used along the lines of "you get what you pay for".

[265] Puns between 加工 (*kakou*, "processing") and 過去 (*kako*, "past"), and between 現在 (*genzai*, "present") and 健在 (*kenzai*, "alive and well").

SHINOBU FUTURE

Monogatari Series Website
30 June 2024
Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Translation: Polaris Translations

"I have been getting the feeling that there is no hope for me in the future, even if I am to live any longer. Is it not the case that there will never be any more sparkling and wondrous occasions to occur in my life?"

The former Kissshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade—the ex-iron-blooded, ex-hot-blooded, ex-cold-blooded ex-vampire, whom oni-no-oniichan referred to as Oshino Shinobu—expressed her concerns to me as she lay draped across the sofa in a face-down position.

Now hold on, shouldn't you have gotten over those already?

Those trifling concerns of yours.

"In the first place, it wouldn't be a 'life', would it? Your six hundred years were not spent in life as a human, but in death as a monster."[266]

"Who are you saying spent six hundred years in death as a monster?"

Well, 'tis true that I was killed, in a way.

---

[266] The word 人生 (*jinsei*, "life" (more precisely "someone's lifespan from birth to death")) is comprised of the kanji 人 ("human") and 生 ("life" (in this case, the concept of life in relation to death)).

By my master.

That was what the former Heartunderblade said.

In other words, her time spent in death as a monster was what was keeping her alive, which was a little ironic.

"Alas, these sorts of things do require regular therapy sessions, after all. In the end, there is always the chance for rebounding."

"It seriously feels like I'm listening to the ramblings of an old lady. It's like something I'd rather listen to while sitting on a porch, not in a therapy room. Well, it's true that if you've lived for six hundred years, you've probably experienced most things that can happen to us—"

However, wasn't the advancement of technology something that was a constant surprise? Light bulbs, television, cell phones—and spaceships.

Same for weapons.

Unbelievable breakthroughs, rendering history up until this point into the mere past, would make their appearance on a regular basis—that was certainly the case for the hundred years I'd been alive (been dead).

A dazzling future.

And a dizzying one.

"Think back, former Heartunderblade. Even if you try to look like you know everything there is to know, you were pretty surprised at the invention of paper, weren't you?"

"I have not lived that long of a life. However, while you may be but a mere chickling from my point of view, I suppose you are indeed still an immortal aberration. I was right to speak to you about this."

"If that's how you're going to praise me, then I can't help but think that, yeah, you really have grown old."

"Oh, quiet, you. But you see, corpse doll. The fact is, I have gotten too used to that production of singularities that occurs on a regular basis. A great new invention that will turn the world on its head? For me, 'tis but a common occurrence. 'Tis easy for me to classify it by thinking, 'ah, yes, so it falls under that pattern.'"

"It's not like you're the one making all those great new inventions."

Perhaps it was like how what was universal was unchangeable.[267]

Turning that around, it could mean that being unable to feel change led to being unable to feel the future. Well, no matter how great an invention was, to her, it might be nothing more than a continuation of the unbroken chain of history. As a matter of fact, it would be impossible to find anything truly new—no matter how much you polished it.

No matter how much it sparkled. Or glittered.

"At the same time, isn't it not that the future isn't changing, but you yourself? If you're as dull as you are, and you don't try to polish yourself, then of course the future won't end up polished, either."

"Indeed!"

Um, it's a bit bothersome if you were actually convinced by that.

I wasn't trying to be emotionally moving or anything.

Really, you've become cute.

"Living a long life also means learning to avoid friction. But it seems that, as a result, I have forgotten how to file myself down."

"Well, in the past, it's more like your existence was the file itself. Also, 'friction' and 'polishing' use different kanji."[268]

"You can write them using the same kanji. Unlike you, I have lived a long life, which is why I know this."[269]

"So much for avoiding friction."

"Even when I think I have changed, I end up repeating the same things over again, it seems. 'Tis as they say, the soul of a child of three is the same at six hundred."[270]

---

[267] Pun between 普遍 (*fuhen*, "universal") and 不変 (*fuhen*, "unchangeable").

[268] Yotsugi originally says that the 摩 (*ma*) in 摩擦 (*masatsu*, "friction") and the 磨 (*ma*) in 研磨 (*kenma*, "polishing") are different characters.

[269] "Polishing" can be written as 研摩 (*kenma*), which does use the same character as 摩擦 (*masatsu*, "friction").

[270] A modification of the phrase 三つ子の魂百まで (*mitsugo no tamashii hyaku made*, "the soul of a child of three is the same at one hundred"). It has a similar meaning to the phrase "a leopard cannot change its spots".

"Rather than regression, a resurgence of the past. After six hundred years, it can be tricky to tell if you've gotten used to new stimuli, or if your senses have become dulled to new stimuli. Though I'm sure there are plants that have lived longer than you have. Like thousand-year-old cedars."

Speaking of which, oni-no-onii-chan, who was a thrall of the former Heartunderblade, had once prattled on about wanting to become a plant. With one's teenage years being filled with new surprises and discoveries every day, that did sound like something that would be said by a teenager—a teenager, who was forced to undergo change whether they wanted to or not.

It might sound like an enlightened statement, but it could also be seen as a confession of being too delicate to withstand stimuli.

"It's also possible you're just afraid of panicking, and so you're retreating back into your own shell. After all, if you're set on changing the future, then you're free to change it as much as you'd like. At the very least, for the worse."

"What is the use in changing it for the worse?"

"It's fine even if it's for the worse."

Hm?

Hadn't we reached the same conclusion as with someone else? Even though we should have been talking about something completely different.

"Even for someone like you, who has been worshiped as a god and has lived at the South Pole, there should still be plenty of things you have yet to try. Have you read every book that's been written in this world?"

"No matter what book it is that I read, 'tis all the same to me."

"What a load of shit."

Well, it was true that when the quantity of books was so vast, that vastness would end up averaging out. If you had a mixture of jewels and stones, the jewels and the regular old stones would be seen as having equal value.

In short, it was because the sample size was so large.

"In that case, and this could be a different argument from the earlier one about new inventions, but if what you see, hear, and taste all seem the

same to you, isn't that ultimately because you don't actually know those things very well? Apparently, for those who specialize in the field, it's possible to differentiate between each and every one of a hundred goldfish."

Youngsters may see all traditional performances as the same, and the elderly may treat all subcultures as similar to one another.

"If you happen to reunite with an old friend after a long time and they say, 'you haven't changed at all', that's not because you really haven't changed. It could just signify a disconnect, where your friend just doesn't know about how much you've changed in the meantime. Well, not that you have any friends."

"Quiet, you. I do have friends."

"Oh? How intriguing."

"That is what you are."

"That future was completely beyond my expectations. Considering you had once come close to killing me."

I certainly never expected that the future would involve a therapy session regarding the worthless concerns of the King of Aberrations, stretched out across a sofa.

As she'd said, I had existed for only one-sixth of the former Heartunderblade's lifespan, but that was still on the longer side—thus, I could guarantee that the future was not certain.

Then again, as a specialist of immortal aberrations, I couldn't deny that it was just a peaceful variation of the way things should be.

It was ultimately just a manner of speaking.

An explanatory consolation.

"Because things continue to undergo refinement,[271] that thought experiment where the future feels more boring than the past could actually come true."

---

[271] The term used here is ソフィスティケート (*sofisutikeeto*, "sophisticate"), which in context is used to mean "refinement" (an example given by the dictionary is "urbanization"). I've decided to translate it as "refinement" (together with the Japanese word 洗練 (*senren*, also "refinement") because I felt that using

"Mm? What is it that you mean? Are you referring to how something can be polished so much that it cannot be shaved down any further?"

"In terms of books, the books of the past used to be pretty all over the place, right? According to Sengoku Nadeko, that was a good thing, but older books wouldn't even have proper story composition or development, or even any distinction between genres. Compared to that, present-day books follow a very refined format."

"Who in the world is Sengoku Nadeko?"

"Sheesh."

"Should it not be 'Nadeshiko'?"[272]

"What a fresh reaction. It's gone all the way around to feeling new."

"And, the moment a format becomes established, does that not end up fixing the future in place?"

"Like the 5-7-5-7-7 pattern, which is said to be the epitome of refinement? Well, even wars used to be pretty crude in the past. They would wave around blunt weapons while yelling battle cries. These days, you can gracefully control a drone from an air-conditioned room, and attack from complete safety."

"'Tis still rather crude, no? That is what I have been saying. Even if it has been refined, the essence of it has not changed."

"When something is presumed to be vampirism but actually turns out to be rabies, that's also a form of refinement, or a soft landing. If you're aware of the thrilling, heart-pounding era in which the world was filled with evil spirits impossible to understand, the present day dominated by compliance standards seems a lot more worthless, doesn't it? How pitiful."

"Do not just say whatever you want, and then show pity however you want. Besides, if you are to bring up compliance standards, then 'tis not the past or the future that will undergo refinement, but I myself."

---

the word "sophisticated" would sound odd given its more common definition of "having good taste".

[272] The usual reading of 撫子 (*nadeko*) is *nadeshiko*.

"In that case, I'm not exactly in the safety zone, either. Since I'm a tween girl corpse doll."

Before long, monstrous apparitions could end up becoming nothing more than relics of the past—nothing more than corpses of the past.[273]

Well, no, I guess we've already become that.

At the very least, in childrens' illustrations of what things might be like in the future, there's no more room to depict any monsters.

"Even with your thralls, compared to your first generation that was born four hundred years ago, your second generation from modern times has turned out pretty docile. The second-generation thrall might seem like a reckless fool to those who only know of him, but he's nothing much compared to how rough-and-tumble the first generation was, right?"

"Oho, I see. When you put it like that, 'tis hard to simply say that the past was always better."

Perhaps this peaceful livelihood, without any stimuli, is what is actually stimulating for me right now—said the aberration of legend, with quite the mature remark. Like a plant whose branches and roots would not grow any longer.[274]

But really, neither "life" nor "living" would apply to you.

It should be "death" and "destruction".[275]

"Well, the reason books of the past used to be all over the place can simply be due to the fact that it was hard to go back and rewrite them if needed. Paper used to be extremely valuable, after all."

"Ka ka. In that case, I shall be sure to live as long as possible, until the invention of an app that can rewrite my life."

---

[273] Pun between 遺物 (*ibutsu*, "relic") and 異物 (*ibutsu*, "strange object" or "corpse"). Both meanings apply in the sense that they're aberrations and they're dead, but I opted for the latter meaning.

[274] The word 枯れた (*kareta*) can mean "mature", but it can also mean "withered" (as a plant).

[275] Yotsugi is pointing out the kanji 生 ("life") and 活 ("living"), which together make up the word 生活 (*seikatsu*, "livelihood") as used by Shinobu previously. She then uses 死 ("death") and 滅 ("destruction"), which together make up the word 死滅 (*shimetsu*, "extinction").

Though that day might not be very far off.

Even this very conversation we were having could be a past that was carefully rewritten in the future.

YOTSUGI SONG

Gift to YOASOBI's Ayase
11 September 2024

Translation: Polaris Translations

"Heya, oni-no-onii-chan. Wanna start a band?"

The corpse doll who was quick to be influenced by her surroundings, Ononoki Yotsugi, came into my room through the window carrying guitars, basses, drums, clarinets, and microphones. I wanted to tell her to save the sleep-talking for when she was actually asleep, but I was getting the same vibe as Hitagi's stationery from the past, and criticizing a power-type aberration who could still move nimbly while carrying guitars, basses, drums, clarinets, and microphones on her back was probably not something a wise person would do.

… Clarinets?

What are you gonna do with clarinets?

"Or rather, Ononoki-chan. We have some thoughts about you making it onto the cover art, y'see."

"Oh my. Did the main characters of *Old Season* get their feelings hurt?"

"Shut up. Who are you calling the main characters of *Old Season*?"

At this point, you're very much a member of the old guard, yourself.

Well, in terms of both her personality and her standpoint, it was true that Ononoki-chan was well-suited for supporting roles.

"Out of respect for dear old oni-i-chan, I'll let you have the guitarist role. I've brought a few guitars with me, so pick whatever you like. I'll be the drummer."

"Because you're a power-type character?"

"Because the drummer is the only one that can stay seated on stage, which is more comfortable."

"Are you Kushinaka Kogushi!?"[276]

However, with that in mind, the times really had changed since the era of Kogu-nee. Even in Japan, there was a growing trend of allowing cashiers to remain seated when dealing with customers. Perhaps it wouldn't be so unusual these days to hold a performance where all the band members were sitting down.

"What about the vocalist?"

"That's me. I'll be the drummer and vocalist."

"Then again, Ononoki-chan, you were surprisingly pretty good at singing, weren't you? Despite being expressionless, and with that emotionless monotone."

"I'm gonna kill you off."

She countered me in the Okinawan dialect.

While expressionless, and with an emotionless monotone.

"It's not that surprising. Aberrations fundamentally originate from 'beings that make noise, but are unable to be seen', after all. They're wavelengths, therefore they can pass through walls, make bodies tremble—and move people's hearts."

They were wavelengths.

But they were also surging seas.[277]

---

[276] Kogushi is the older sister of Choushi, one of the protagonists of the *Sekai Series*, another light novel series by Nisio Isin.

[277] Pun between 波長 (*hachou*, "wavelength") and 波濤 (*hatou*, "surging sea").

"'NO MUSIC, NO LIFE.' —If I were to take this famous saying and rephrase it for aberrations, it would be like this. 'MUSIC IS UNDEAD.'"

Music never dies.

Those were classy words for a corpse to say, and yet I found my heart being moved by them just the same, so I shrugged my shoulders and reached for one of the guitars that Ononoki-chan had brought in—although from electric to acoustic to even a double-necked guitar, it seemed like there were a lot of different types.

"Ononoki-chan. Which of these is a lefty guitar, so that it goes with me wearing my watch on my right wrist?"

"It's about time you killed off your strong longing to become left-handed, oni-no-onii-chan."

YOTSUGI SNOW DOME

MIJIKANAMONOGATARI
11 September 2024

TRANSLATION: POLARIS TRANSLATIONS

The corpse doll known as Ononoki Yotsugi had become a freeloader in my house, the Araragi household, so for the sake of strengthening our friendship, on a certain Sunday, I decided to build a *kamakura* snow hut.[278] It's possible that you might come to a misunderstanding after taking into account my exceptional capabilities, but no, I wasn't particularly trying to establish a shogunate in the Kanagawa Prefecture…[279] I meant that I was going about diligently building a hemispherical dwelling out of the snow that had piled up at Namishiro Park (which I still didn't know the proper reading of).

If I had the strength of a vampire, this would be a simple bit of light labor (though I figured opinions would be divided on if any labor could be called "light"), but unfortunately, these days I'd fallen under the

[278] A *kamakura* (かまくら) is a type of traditional dome-shaped hut made out of snow.

[279] Referring to the Kamakura shogunate, which was located in what is now the Kanagawa Prefecture.

circumstances in which I couldn't use such supernatural powers for my own convenience. I had no choice but to build the *kamakura* with the strength of a human and the knowledge of a human, using the arms and legs of a human… Obviously, I couldn't ask Shinobu for help, either. This was some wining and dining I would have to perform in secret, while Shinobu, who had poor chemistry with Ononoki-chan, was still asleep.

How shady of me.

If it were possible, I would have liked to bring some heavy machinery, but partly due to budget constraints, I was able to make do with a single shovel. In the center of the first *kamakura* I'd made in a while, I placed a *shichirin* grill,[280] and after preparing some ice cream and frozen drinks, my preparations were done.

What do you think?

It was the first time making one of these since I'd been on good terms with my younger sisters, but I wanted to say it had come out looking pretty good… And so, I put a blindfold on my guest, Ononoki-chan, and brought her from my home to this guest house.

Or, I suppose, this snow dome.

"Isn't 'snow dome' not the English translation of *kamakura*? Oni-no-onii-chan, with that level of English, it seems like you'll be hopeless for entrance exams,"

said Ononoki-chan, scathingly.

Perhaps it was because I had blindfolded her while bringing her here.

"Visually, it looks too much like a crime. To blindfold a tween girl and drag her off into a deserted park. I might carry around onee-chan in unusual ways, but don't start surpassing that quirkiness so easily."

"Oh, don't get so mad. This is supposed to be a welcome party for you, after all."

"Welcome party? This guy's hilarious,"

said Ononoki-chan, without so much as a smile.

---

[280] A *shichirin* (七輪, lit. "seven wheels") is a small charcoal grill.

Well, she was a corpse doll, so her expression wouldn't even waver… She was a dead being, and her facial muscles were dead, too. Even though she might appear to be angry, it was possible she wasn't actually in that bad of a mood.

"I see. It's true that, because I'm a corpse, I like cold temperatures, and I like ice cream. But there's no need to be so eager to please. I don't have anything like a mood."[281]

I don't have emotions or feelings, or even a heart.

So said Ononoki-chan as she sat down on the snow chair (I didn't know if such a term existed, but basically it was snow packed into a square shape) inside the *kamakura*, reaching for the various kinds of ice cream I'd prepared.

Though she could only eat one kind at a time, she was quite dextrous to secure the second candidate in advance.

Thank goodness. That had to mean she didn't hate me so much that she wasn't going to touch the food and drink I prepared.

"I'm not going to hate you. Like I said, I don't have any emotions. No matter what kind of person you are. Even if you're the worst person in the world. Or even if you're the best person in the world."

"The best person in the world usually doesn't end up hated, right?"

"I'm sure you know that that's not the case, oni-i-chan, and of course, I won't come to like someone just because they're the best person in the world."

That sounded even more distressing.

Being unable to think of good things as good, being unable to like someone that you like, being unable to think of interesting things as interesting… Well, I'd had first-hand experience with those twisted feelings up until spring break, though.

Well, it wasn't like she could feel the emotion of distress.

Not in her case.

---

[281] Pun between 機嫌 (*kigen*, "mood") and 機嫌取り (*kigen-tori*, "eager to please").

It could even be that she was simply eating the ice cream and frozen drinks reflexively because they were in front of her, and she wasn't actually deriving joy from it.

"There's no need to worry. I won't be blowing away the Araragi household like I've done in the past."

"…"

"This time, my duty is ultimately to keep watch. Whether you pander to me or not, I won't be using 'Unlimited Rulebook' gratuitously… I plan on devoting myself to being Araragi Tsukihi's stuffed doll to the very end. So your concerns are needless… Or rather, your concerns are pointless."

For you, oni-i-chan, who can no longer become a vampire, I may seem like a concentration of violence that you have no choice but to bend the knee to, but even if you bribe me with these, there's no chance of it affecting my judgment or conduct—said Ononoki-chan, licking away at the bottom of the cap of the ice cream pint.

I was impressed that she could say such a long line while sticking her tongue out, but on the other hand, I couldn't help but feel anxious in a way, knowing that the absence of emotions did not necessarily mean that her decisions were always correct—there was a possibility that, due to a miscalculation, I would end up brutally murdered.

Toiling away at building a *kamakura*, borrowing a *shichirin* grill from Kanbaru's room (her room was a black hole, so it contained most things), and preparing ice cream and frozen drinks… Of course, those were indeed all for the sake of buttering up Ononoki-chan—but they were not for the sake of my personal safety.

Ultimately, there was nothing I could do about whatever happened to someone like me—I would have to accept whatever the punishment was for abusing vampiric powers up until now. If she was going to keep watch over me, then I could even say that was more convenient for me. I might have even gone out of my way to ask for it.

However, what were the thoughts of the one watching me?

And this was right after going through all that with Teori Tadatsuru—I figured it would feel like agony to be stuck watching a worthless loser like

me, so I planned this show of hospitality for the bare minimum of repaying her. But it seemed that I was the one that was off-base here.

Regardless of the thoughts of the one watching me.

Or, regardless of the thoughts of this executioner—she had no thoughts at all.

"However, my girlfriend had once been living her life having lost those 'thoughts', too. So that's why I just can't leave you alone. A corpse like you."

"Pervert."

I think I'm learning the feeling of being in danger, said the tween girl in a tone of voice that was below freezing. But even if she was telling a joke as loose as powder snow, it seemed to me that getting her to say that she was learning a new feeling was an accomplishment of sorts.

Well.

I suppose that was where we were at for now.

I could only pray that our relationship didn't turn ice-cold.

"It seems like we'll be together for a long time, so I'll make sure you can freeload without rotting away, Ononoki-chan."

Even if we weren't inside the *kamakura*, it was a chillingly bad joke[282]—but I said it anyway, with a dashing look.

[282] 寒い (*samui*) means "cold", but it can also mean "lame" (as in a bad joke).

OUGI ROAD MOVIE

Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Translation: Polaris Translations

To celebrate my entrance into university, on a certain Sunday during the preparatory period leading up to the start of the university year, my enigmatic junior named Oshino Ougi invited me to hang out with her. While I, Araragi Koyomi, was an agreeable young man who eagerly agreed to any invite from her no matter what, I figured just in case that I would ask for our destination in advance. Even I had had enough of Ougi-chan's surprises.

"I wasn't going to frighten you or anything. I just thought we could go see a movie together."

"A movie?"

"That's right. Our beloved Araragi-senpai may be living quite the dramatic life, but how about getting to admire the stories of others, for a change?"

I see.

Indeed, it was quite the pertinent suggestion. Up until now, I had been entirely focused on my own life, entrance exams included. Even when I fell

to hell, all I saw were my own retrospections—not that that was a bad thing, but now that I was about to depart for a new world, it would be rather irresponsible of me to continue thinking of nothing but myself.

She likely also meant for me to widen my field of vision by looking at the large screen of a movie—dear me, Ougi-chan, you really were the niece of that Oshino Meme.

"All right, that's fine with me. I'll let you pick the genre. However, if you're thinking about trying to scare me with a horror movie, I'll have to kindly inform you that such a scheme will end fruitlessly. After having experienced true fear, there's no way I'll be shaking at some imitation vampire. Unfortunately."

"Understood, Araragi-senpai. Allow me to escort you to the theater of fear. Rather, the movie theater."

"?"

Her phrasing made it sound like she was trying to show off her taste through her choice of movie theater, even before giving away the movie title. Was she about to bring me to some fancy place like an arthouse theater?

To be honest, I didn't have such highbrow tastes myself… Even if I wanted to look good in front of my junior, I didn't have it in me to discuss the minor independent films made by great directors in the past, okay?

I wasn't Hanekawa, after all.

However, this concern was unfounded.

The movie theater wasn't some secret microcinema known to a select few, run in some alleyway I'd never gone down before, but a multiplex owned by a major company in a shopping center—but our seating was a little peculiar.

It was a couple seat.

"Ougi-chan—"

"What seems to be the matter, Araragi-senpai? After all that big talk, are you getting cold feet? How foolish you are—for just seats like these."

These were the only seats available, said Ougi-chan in an unconcerned voice—I couldn't help but feel that she was showing no sign of remorse

toward all those incidents she had stirred up, but if there really were no other empty seats, then there was nothing we could do.

As far as I could see, it looked like the theater was basically empty, but it would probably turn out completely packed in a bit.

"It may be called a 'couple seat', but they can also be used by parent and child or by friends, you know. Araragi-senpai, as the paragon of rationality, surely there's no way you would ever do anything improper with me, right? Or have you actually been looking at me in *that* kind of way? How surprising, to think that Araragi-senpai, known for being such an upstanding guy, would treat me as a woman."

When she said that while looking at me with those dark eyes of hers, it was hard for me to object. I was even thinking to myself that I was being talked into this so easily, but it was already inevitable that I could be talked into anything by Ougi-chan.

I sat down in the couple seat.

Though it was called a seat, it basically looked like a double bed—at this rate, weren't they practically telling us to go to sleep in the middle of the movie?

"Senpai. Please put your arm to the side."

"My arm to the side?"

When I moved my arm up to my side as I was told…

"And here we go."

Ougi-chan lay down with her head on that arm—in other words, an arm pillow.

"Um, Ougi-chan?"

Moreover, she'd placed her head on my upper arm. I'd said that it looked like a double bed, but with how close we were, we would easily be able to fit on a single bed, too.

"Ha ha. I may have been scheming up a lot of things by myself, but maybe all I really wanted was to be spoiled by you, senpai."

"That's not it."

"Next year, I guess I'll just have to be spoiled like this by Kanbaru-senpai instead."

"Don't cause trouble for Kanbaru. Just do it to me instead."

However… I'd known about deluxe seats, but I guess there really were lots of different types of movie theaters. Couple seats and beds… Wasn't there also something like *bakuon* screenings?[283]

"Yes. There are also cheer screenings,[284] as well as sing-along screenings that let you sing together with the characters… We're in an era with a variety of ways to watch movies."

"Now that you say that, I'd really like to try that one thing. Watching a movie outdoors. At a park, or something. You see it sometimes in foreign dramas… It's like they're on a picnic, with a rush mat laid out."

"If it was a foreign drama, they wouldn't be sitting on rush mats."

"Also, this would be outdoors, too, but I'd like to go watch a movie from inside a car. And you can listen to the audio by tuning in with your car radio… A drive-in theater, I think it was called?"

"That sounds nice. When you do go, please let me ride in the passenger seat. If we're inside a car, we'll be able to watch the movie while chatting, right?"

For Ougi-chan, who was quite the talkative girl, a movie theater in which you had to spend around two hours without saying a word might actually be an uncomfortable space for her—but one way or another, it had to be true that she'd planned all this for my sake.

How sweet of her.

"It's something I'd absolutely like to experience in the future, once I learn how to drive a car, but are they still holding those kinds of screenings somewhere in Japan?"

---

[283] 爆音上映 (*bakuon jouei*, "explosive sound screening") is an experimental way of screening films that uses an audio system usually used for live concerts, for louder and more dynamic sound. It appears to have originated in Japan with no equivalent term in English.

[284] 応援上映 (*ouen jouei*, "cheer screening") is another type of film screening originating in Japan, encouraging audience participation through cheering and other reactions toward the film.

I'd described it as something to "experience" as if it were normal, but perhaps in the past, movies really were something to "experience", rather than something to "appreciate".

"That's true even now, isn't it? There's 3D, IMAX, 4DX… Even cases where the actors come up on stage to greet the audience. Well, we live in a world where you can binge an entire season of the latest drama, all on your smartphone. We'll come to a point where we only go to the movie theater to partake in the unique charms of the movie theater."

"If we're going to partake in something, maybe we should've bought some popcorn and cola."

"Ah, you'll have to take care not to make any noise while eating or drinking, or people will disapprove."

"I feel like people will disapprove of how we look right now—but I suppose even manners are changing. There's a rule that says not to turn on your smartphone while the credits are rolling, but there was no such rule back when smartphones didn't even exist."

"Don't people come to watch movies because they want to escape from their cell phone for a bit?"

I wasn't too sure about that. I felt like there would eventually be movie screenings that would allow you to freely use your phone, or something like that. To look up the meaning of a word used in the movie, or to share your thoughts with the other viewers in real time. Wasn't there something for *Noh* or *kabuki* theater that let you follow along while listening to commentary on a device?

"Manners have their own regional differences, too. Overseas, there's a practice of giving a big round of applause once the credits start rolling. Apparently, they'll have loud reactions in response to good scenes."

"I guess that would be a similar feeling to watching a stage play? In Japan, it feels tough to even laugh at a joke in a movie theater."

Because we were talking about manners, and because we were talking about different cultures, I needed to be extremely careful, or I could end up accidentally saying something incredibly rude.

And this wasn't just limited to movies.

I didn't know what was correct and what was the right thing to do, and I didn't know what I needed to prioritize and what I needed to avoid getting wrong—and for me, who was about to depart for that new world, perhaps this was a fitting send-off date.

"Now. The movie is about to start. Please zip your mouth shut."

The talkative girl whispered that into my ear—and at the same time, even the emergency lights turned off, plunging the theater into darkness. During the rest of the screening, Ougi-chan remained in strict adherence to manners, and because there was hardly any weight on my upper arm, it was almost as though I had come to watch the movie on my own.

She'd gotten pretty good at following the rules.

Maybe she really, truly just wanted to come watch a movie—but as for her innermost thoughts, concealed in darkness as though wrapped up in a blanket, I had no way of knowing them.

The only one who knew them was Ougi-chan herself.

SPOILERS

The following two stories contain spoilers for *Musubimonogatari* and *Monster Season*.

To skip them, proceed to page 574.

SODACHI PENALTY

Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Translation: Polaris Translations

Oikura Sodachi was my crazy childhood friend that absolutely hated my guts, and although we'd made it all the way to university while repeating the cycle of cutting ties and confrontations since elementary school, she was also known for her extremely rare, er, quite frequent displays of eccentric behavior. So, on a certain Sunday after our second term exams, when she suddenly invited me to hang out with her, in spite of me being the target of her deep grudge and bottomless hatred, it surely had to be one of those displays.

In times like these, there was a clear way to handle this.

Rejecting her was absolutely out of the question. No matter what she might be planning—because I had sworn that I would even fall to the depths of hell together with Oikura.

However, what we were to be facing now was not the depths of hell, but an escape room event… A puzzle-solving event marketed towards couples, which we could only participate in as a pair. A game where we were locked in a room, with the goal of searching for hints inside and

making full use of our ingenuity and inspiration in order to magnificently escape… It was extremely baffling to me why this girl, who had shut herself in her home for so many years as a teenager, would voluntarily lock herself in a room once more, but the way to handle this was also clear.

Trying to understand Oikura was out of the question.

She refused to be understood.

"But I would like to know why you invited me. If you wanted a partner to go through this room with you, you could have just invited one of your friends."

"I don't have any friends. Making friends would lower my intensity as a human."

"Why are you saying something so foolish… Friends are treasures, you know? If you're really saying that with a straight face, then I can only think that there's something wrong with you. What happened to you to make you say such miserable words?"

"Die."

"You could have just invited Hitagi. You may have been through a lot with her, but she's your friend, right?"

"I don't know about that. If someone has friends outside of me, can I really call them a friend?"

That's way too gloomy…

Aren't you gonna be crushed under the weight of your own gloom?

If I was going to be locked in a room with her, it sounded like it would be the biggest crisis in my entire life.

"Besides, if I invited a friend, this wouldn't be a punishment for me."

"A punishment? Hey now, it was by no means a sin for you to be given life in this world, you know?"

"I don't brood over my life to the point that I think of being born as a sin. It's just that I didn't score as high as I wanted to on our recent exams."

"Huh? Even though you were studying that much?"

"Don't go and twist the knife. It's that part of you, Araragi…"

"It's that part of me that you like so much? I already knew that, but if you say it so directly, it'll make me red in the face."

"Why don't I turn you into red meat, instead?[285] Well, I really was studying a lot. Because the condition was, if I don't reach my target scores, I would have to go on a date with Araragi."

It's no wonder she was studying so much, without even sparing time for sleep.

As her beloved childhood friend, I had some thoughts about "spending time with me" being used as a punishment game, but on the other hand, as someone who was capable of studying without having to sleep thanks to my vampire constitution, I couldn't really criticize her.

"All right. If that's the case, then I'll go along with you. Let's escape from this room as soon as possible."

"With that attitude, there'd be no meaning to the game. If you're going to take part, then you better face each and every puzzle earnestly. Make sure you thoroughly enjoy them."

You could call her serious, or you could call her a stickler… Even though that way of thinking was what caused her life to be ruined.

It was hard to think she'd be able to get by as a working adult without the open-mindedness to ignore the punishment games she set for herself.

"Well, it's fine. When the time comes, I can provide for her for the rest of our lives."

"Did you happen to say something incredibly terrifying just now?"

"No? C'mon, let's get to solving these puzzles."

It was even more taboo to leak spoilers for games like these than it was to leak them for mystery novels, and with constraints on the page count, I was unable to get into the particulars. But, just as Oikura had said, without facing it earnestly, it wasn't even an easy task to find the hints.

On the other hand, I couldn't overlook the feeling that the difficulty was still "somewhat solvable". I might not be Oikura, but as a university student that had managed to get through those incomprehensible second

[285] The original pun was between 照れる (*tereru*, "to be embarrassed") and 照り焼き (*teriyaki*).

term exams in some way or another, it was worth challenging this escape room.

"But, really… I have to wonder how they adjust the level of difficulty for these sorts of things. I've played escape room games on my smartphone before, but sometimes I would just barely solve the puzzle, and sometimes I would just barely not solve it. And when the answer is revealed, I would think that I could have solved it with just a little more thinking… It's like, how do they know what my IQ is? If God had designed this world like how these rooms were designed, I think the world would be a better place."

In actuality, since the god of our town had been a snake, a demon, and a lost child, all far removed from any sort of design sense… There wasn't much more I needed to say.

"You're also tired, right? How Much. This feeling that our efforts will not be rewarded may last for the rest of our lives."

"As if it'll last that long. And who are you calling How Much?"

"You're also tired, right? Euler."

"Eh? Ah, well, yeah."

Aren't you a little too simple, Oikura-san.

Don't just easily agree just because you're a little shaken up… In the future, she was totally going to get caught up in the mood and sign a contract with unfavorable terms.

I was seriously starting to worry about that for her, but she must have regained her sanity through some sort of glitch, for the mathematics girl said, "our efforts *will* be rewarded," taking another attempt at responding, this time with an objection.

"The fact that I'm hanging out with you like this is also a result of my efforts. The efforts of me as a high school student, in not running away from confronting you."

"Were those efforts really necessary?"

"They were. If not for those, I would have spent the rest of my life feeling like a negative number. And for me, that's harder than a life in which I'm left unrewarded."

"…"

When she said she would feel like a negative number, did she mean she would feel like a loser?[286] Well, in fact, it was because the shut-in Oikura of that time decided to take a stand for herself that I was able to come face-to-face with Oikura, my childhood friend and, at the same time, the source of my trauma.

I would have lived out the rest of my life having forgotten an important variable that was a part of Araragi Koyomi… As though I had nearly missed out on an important hint that was crucial in getting out of an escape room.

Because of that one incident in Class 1-3, I had at some point thrown away my rationality, and when it came to that hellish spring break and everything afterwards, it was as if I was sidestepping all those incomprehensible puzzles by coming up with incomprehensible solutions… But perhaps even those fruitless efforts were what led to the present.

It was fine for glitches to be glitches.

After that, Oikura and I cooperated for the first time in about six years to figure out the puzzles of the escape room, and narrowly managed to escape just within the time limit… According to the post-game analysis, there were still several puzzles we hadn't solved, so we didn't exactly get full points, but a clear was a clear. Let's say we were worthy of the Fighting Spirit prize.[287]

However, it seemed that I was the only one who came to that conclusion, having lived a life full of compromises and concessions, for Oikura said,

"There's a condition that states that we have to keep challenging different games until we get full points,"

and proceeded to drag me by the scruff of my neck to another escape room… I could say she was spinning her wheels through life, or taking a

---

[286] Pun between 負の数 (*fu no suu*, "negative number") and 負け犬 (*makeinu*, "loser").

[287] The Fighting Spirit prize (敢闘賞, *kantou-shou*) is one of the three prizes awarded in a sumo tournament for competitors who showed their best efforts.

tour of hell on Earth, or endlessly repaying debts of effort, but it seemed to me that she was voluntarily continuing to walk down a path of her own destruction. But as a matter of fact, towards that childhood friend of mine.

Hate with hate yet hate for hate to hate in hate at hate by hate of hate—was not what I felt.

SHINOBU TONIGHT

Mijikanamonogatari
11 September 2024

Translation: Polaris Translations

Needless to say, Oshino Shinobu and I were inextricably joined at the hip, two sides of the same coin. However, after thinking about it, I realized that this relationship of ours was a little bit unbalanced.

I wouldn't say it was completely one-sided, but it was exploitative.

It may have been one thing during that spring break as a high schooler, when I'd only been thinking of myself, but after graduating from college and becoming employed as a police officer, now that I was looking back—for example, it had been decided that I would be going on a long-term business trip to America, but Shinobu, who was sealed inside my shadow, would have no choice but to accompany me.

There was no chance of a solo assignment.

When it came to my self-centered, almost impulsive decisions, Shinobu would have to get swept up in them regardless of her complaints—of course, this sort of thing was nothing new, but now that I had realized it once, it was going to continue to weigh on my mind.

I had tried to forcibly convince myself that it would be a good business trip for her, too, because America was the birthplace of donuts, but after looking it up, I learned that there was currently only one Mister Donut store open in the state of Illinois.

What a tragedy.

Ignorant as I was, I didn't even know the exact location of Illinois, but there was no doubt that it wasn't the state of Virginia, which was where I was to be transferred—this was not something for which a mere apology would suffice, and even considering that, this could even be considered an emergency.

In a land without Mister Donut, wouldn't that girl end up reverting to her old ways as a vampire? A vampire that could lay waste to humanity… To think that the fate of the world lay on the shoulders of a Golden Chocolate.

And so, on Sunday, the night before I departed for America, I went to the nearest Mister Donut, bought as many donuts as I could, and took them home to line up in front of Shinobu.

How about it? This was the economic power of an adult.

I was anticipating that she would surely be jumping for joy, but instead…

"Th-This is kind of—when there are this many, it feels like the story of *Yam Gruel*,"[288]

said the young girl, seeming a little repulsed.

She'd gotten to the point of being so knowledgeable about Japanese literature… I had remembered from back when I was a high school student that this young girl had spoken about how she wanted to eat all the donuts within the glass case, and while I hadn't gotten all of them, I'd gone and collected every variety for her, though.

---

[288] 芋粥 (*Imogayu*, "Yam Gruel") is a story by Akutagawa Ryuunosuke. In the story, the main character's dream in life is to eat his fill of yam gruel, but when it is given to him, he finds he does not actually want it.

"I am delighted by your thoughtfulness, and of course I shall partake. But if I were to greedily devour them in one go, I feel as though I would be doing a great disservice to the maker."

"Where the heck did that gluttonous vampire go?"

At this rate, it was like my fear that she might revert to her old ways was completely unnecessary.

"Having said that, getting to have the complete set of every variety has been a dream of mine."

"So it was your dream, huh."

"Leaving them for even a night will cause their flavor to diminish, and we will not be able to freeze them and take them with us. All right, my master. Shall we split all of these donuts in half between us?"

With that, Shinobu pulled (from her belly) a Japanese sword—the sword that she had once used to bisect all sorts of aberrations and turn them into her sustenance, the demon blade "Kokorowatari"—or so I thought, but it turned out to be a bread knife.

A production on the milder side, to keep with the times.

To be honest, even if we split them in half, it was still a considerable amount, and I wasn't a teenager anymore. If I were to eat this many sweets, I was sure my stomach would (happily) complain—did I need to call over my younger sisters with hearty appetites?

No, this was our last night in Japan.

I wanted to spend tonight alone with Shinobu.

Well, my stomach (happily) complaining was really just a matter of my feelings, because thanks to me retaining somewhat of a vampiric constitution, my internal organs would always be those of a teenager's—I would more or less be able to go along with Shinobu's dream.

"Hah!"

Together with that shout, Shinobu sliced each donut into perfect halves—I was thinking she would divide them into semicircles, but she cut them in a way that I wasn't sure if I should describe as horizontally or vertically, slicing them in a manner like *Kintarou-ame* to produce two perfect circles.

It looked as though the already large number of donuts had doubled in quantity—was this how Nobita-kun felt when he used the Multiplication Liquid?

In other words, for donuts like the Angel French, it was like cutting through the cream portion… It seemed that she had some stubbornness about preserving the circular shape, no matter what.

Stubbornness, or maybe gluttony.[289]

"Ka ka. Good. Then, let us eat. We shall eat the same donuts in the same order."

"What a finicky rule…"

It was like some sort of exorcism ritual.

As expected of a bread knife modeled after the legendary demon blade, bisecting these donuts did not diminish their flavor in the slightest—perhaps I should be calling it "Kanwatari".[290]

"So, my master. It seems as though you are worrying about something inconsequential as usual, but such anguish is unnecessary between us,"

she said.

After having gobbled up most of the donuts, she finally went and said it. Something that I felt like she should've said in the beginning.

"In the first place, I was originally an aberration from overseas. Spending these years in Japan is actually more of an irregular period of studying abroad for me. While I have not spent that long of a time on the American continent—that is why I am quite looking forward to it."

"Oh. So you saw through me, huh?'

"We are joined at the hip, after all."

Therefore, my master, your conclusions are the same as my conclusions—she said.

This celebration of the eve of our departure could only exist because I had been spoiled by that magnanimity for so long, but it seemed this partner of mine was even more arrogant than I'd thought.

---

[289] Pun between 意地 (*iji*, "stubbornness") and 食い意地 (*kui-iji*, "gluttony").

[290] Like Kokorowatari, but with 環 ("ring").

Though we were joined at the hip, I still didn't understand her completely.

"Hmph. Speaking of which, my master, the time we have spent together has become rather long, has it not?"

"Really? Well, it's been quite the number of years since that spring when I was seventeen years old, but for someone who's lived for six hundred years, it's a small number, isn't it? It's basically like yesterday."

"And I am only saying this because we have reached today, but I believed you would soon be giving up, my master."

"Oi, oi."

"No, I am serious. A life lived while having to deal with me, I believed you would barely last two months at the least, and six months at most."

Hmm.

It was a surprise to hear that she'd been thinking like that, but looking back to those days, perhaps that was a reasonably realistic assumption to make… After all, the contract formed by that specialist, Oshino Meme, was really just an impulsive decision made during that hellish spring break.

Immature as I was, there was a decent chance of me overturning it. While asserting that a contract signed by a minor was invalid.

"In fact, I would think that I was the one to end up distorting your life, my master. So I do not mind accompanying you on as many business trips as you like. No matter where on Earth you go, your shadow will remain my coffin. As long as you are alive, of course."

And, with a yawn, just like she'd said, Shinobu dove into my shadow—her usual nocturnal habits as a vampire seemed to have been getting disturbed recently.

To that partner of mine, for the first time in a while, I wanted to say these words. Even as irresponsible as I was, I wanted to say these words, which I figured I would continue to say even a hundred years later.

If you were to die tomorrow, then I'm ready for my life to end tomorrow—if you care to live for today, then so will I.

Afterword

The thirty-three stories compiled in this book[291] are a collection of very short compositions, dubbed "short short stories",[292] that I had the privilege of writing in various places in relation to the anime adaptation for the series of novels beginning with *Hitagi Crab*, known as the *Monogatari Series*. They are more light-hearted exchanges from the main story, with more emphasis on trivial conversations and trivial events between individual characters. Though the *Monogatari Series* anime had once reached a conclusion with *Zoku Owarimonogatari* in the year 2018, it had come to be restarted in the form of *Off & Monster Season*, so I thought I would take this chance to collect all the short stories up to *Mayoi Welcome*, which serves as the prequel to the first volume of *Monster Season*, *Shinobumonogatari*. The first story, *Hitagi Buffet*, is a short-short written almost fifteen years ago, which makes it go beyond nostalgia into feeling fresh. As I compiled these stories, I considered rearranging them in various ways like ordering

---

[291] This is the afterword, or rather foreword, of the actual *Mijikanamonogatari* Japanese volume, which didn't contain all the stories in this book.

[292] The usual word for "short story" would be 短編 (*tanpen*). Nisio refers to these stories as 短々編 (*tantanpen*) with a repetition kanji to emphasize "short", hence "short short story". "Short short stories" are a real term in English (often used synonymously with "flash fiction"), and the usual Japanese term for these would be ショートショート (*shooto shooto*, "short-short"), which is used later in this foreword.

them chronologically or grouping them by character, but in the end, I had them be compiled in the order they were written. The contents are also mostly the same as when they were written. It is hard not to be able to feel the circumstances of each story's publication, but I suppose being able to experience the passage of time is also a part of novels. Or perhaps, it is not too much to say that you can see the progress made while writing a world that lies somewhere between the *Monogatari Series* anime and the original novels. If you like, please enjoy the stories while comparing them against the list of first publications at the end of the book. Incidentally, I have had the privilege of writing further short short stories for each special edition of the *Bakemonogatari* manga (all twenty-two volumes!), and I imagine I will be continuing to write them in the future in some manner. Even in this volume, there are four new stories, *Yotsugi Snow Dome*, *Ougi Road Movie*, *Sodachi Penalty*, and *Shinobu Tonight*, written with the intention of going back to basics. Respectively, the stories feature Araragi-kun during his time at Naoetsu High, Araragi-kun after graduation, Araragi-kun during his time at Manase University, and Araragi-kun after becoming a working adult. In addition, *Nadeko Past* and *Shinobu Future* were two stories written for the production of *Off & Monster Season*'s ending theme. For that alone, my gratitude and appreciation know no bounds, but it would not be an exaggeration to say that the writing of these two stories was the catalyst for the publication of this book, which makes my gratitude and appreciation even more boundless. On the cover, Ononoki Yotsugi appears once again, drawn by VOFAN-san inspired by those two stories. At some point, that girl has ended up an indispensable character to the *Monogatari Series* as well. Thank you very much! And so, for the sake of being able to write more short short stories, I would very much like to write the next installment of the main series, the second volume of *Family Season*, *Tsugimonogatari*. I wonder who the protagonist will be?

NISIOISIN

SPECIAL THANKS

For their contributions in translating and proofreading the stories

Boosmahn, CarmaChameleon, Eagle Translations, Edo, gerrettheferrett, Haremless, Kavitha, Kizunever Scanlations, Mirrored Translations, nyorem, Polaris Translations, Ryoukugan, Shurim's 3AM Translations, shuumatsu no fool, SirusRiddler, Sssciencemancer, Stationary Proofreations, sumiraj, Tarable Translations, Tigoris Translates, trauben saft

For their help with everything else, great and small

aiko, appointedfern, araragiumi, atollintercomsystems, ccherias, dreamcankles, Erigu, Errnor, Gianfrar, Kakuzō, kamimashita, ksgu, kyon geass, MickJerdream, nyaaaan, persia_n, RdNetwork, regulus corneas, saruhikofushimi, Simok123, Socuta, Spazzo965, SSScentipede, The Makster, thejonion, Valan, WaifuForLaifu

For making with me what Vertical never will

bluex, »sawa«

For being part of my life all these years

The people of #monogatari-anime

For reading this book until the very end

You

Not for sale